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The Trust is the Work

How School Counsellors Maintain Alliances with Young
People when Sharing Information Because of
Safeguarding Concerns: A Phronetic Case Study

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Thesis for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Sussex

The Trust is the work: Exploring how school counsellors maintain alliances with young people when sharing information because of safeguarding concerns. A Phronetic Case Study.

SUMMARY

This ESRC funded project explores how school counsellors navigate relationships and maintain trust in therapeutic alliances with young people when sharing information because of safeguarding concerns. It seeks to capture a holistic picture of information sharing through illuminating the different perspectives of young people (10), school-based counsellors (6) and designated safeguarding leads (2). This project's phronetic stance seeks to illuminate the deliberations and practical wisdom of its participants to develop practice (Flyvbjerg, 2001). It uncovers young peoples' and professionals' reflections on the humanness of information sharing processes through exploring contextual, relational and affective factors.

This case study was based at The Place2Be which is the largest UK school-based counselling agency (Place2Be, 2016). The fieldwork took place in six secondary schools. In an iterative process, I used a combination of semi-structured and interactive group interviews that used a fictional vignette as stimulation for discussion and a film of professionals' views for the young people to critique.

Professional participants later met to co-reflect on the data. This created a 'polyphony of voices' that dialogued and responded to each other through the research process (Flyvbjerg, 2001: 139). I used phronetic bricolage to apply a multilayered approach, analyzing data both thematically and narratively (Trnavcevic and Biloslavo, 2017).

The central finding concerns counsellor availability which is formulated both psychologically, by maintaining empathy and attending to the young person's concerns; and practically. A feature of an 'available' counsellor is their perceived trustworthiness as demonstrated by continued honest engagement and transparent communication. This is experienced as a participatory process by young people. All participants highlighted the anxiety that accompanies information sharing. Professional relationships with school safeguarding leads emerged as affecting counsellor containment and hence their availability. Trust in alliances with young people during information sharing is supported by participatory practices and sufficient containment experiences for school counsellors.

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List of Initials

BACP British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

CAMHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service

CPO Child Protection Officer (Previous term for DSL)

DSL Designated Safeguarding Lead

ESRC The Economic and Social Research Council

NSPCC National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

SBC School-based Counsellor

SPM School Practice Managers (Lead Counsellor in a School within the Place2Be

UKCP United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy

UNCRC United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child

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In memory of Anne and Moby.

Chapter One: Introduction

“... If you don’t have trust with the counsellor then... its gonna make you feel worse... because you are not gonna say the things you want to say and to get help with... you are gonna button it more [Emma, YP7].

Forward: My Professional Journey to this Research

Over the last eighteen years, I have worked therapeutically with young people. During this time, I have received many disclosures of risk from vulnerable young clients and regularly faced the challenge of maintaining trust when worries about young people’s safety necessitated the sharing of confidences, sometimes against client’s wishes. This research has evolved from my interconnected and diverse professional experiences. These have included working as a school-based counsellor (SBC) for the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and working therapeutically with young people in care. I have attended numerous professional meetings to support and represent clients, sometimes witnessing profound discomfort by young people about how information from their lives was talked about, stored and passed between adult professionals. Below, in an early section of my research journal, I reflected on how these formative experiences influenced the development of this research.

An encouraging, but often worn-out looking social worker would enter carrying a thumbed and bulging buff folder habitually stuffed with papers. Listening to my clients after these meetings I became aware of the projections onto these folders and the information they contained. Some young people talked about the power of these dirtied unfathomable files to control their lives from momentous decisions such as contact with their brothers and sisters to everyday decisions about whether they were allowed to stay the night with friends. I remember one young person describing how her grubby folder mirrored her life- ‘passed around’ and ‘too heavy to carry’. Another described how she felt like the letters and forms inside were ‘picked over’ by adult professionals leaving her ‘nowhere to hide’. Some felt that the folders knew more about their early lives than they did.

This professional journey has particular salience because of my chosen methodology – phronesis or practical wisdom, and how it influences research processes (Landman, 2012). I am a United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) registered psychotherapeutic counsellor and former school teacher. These experiences led me to teach at the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge, where I trained professionals, mostly from education or social work backgrounds to become accredited child and adolescent counsellors. Through this journey, I have developed a long-standing professional and academic pre-occupation with how best to maintain trust in therapeutic alliances when limiting young people's rights to confidentiality. I remain curious about how counsellors share information with other professionals, and concerned about what part young people play, if any, in these processes. I have previously written about ethical dilemmas in school counseling, arguing for a transparent approach to sharing information that focuses on seeking informed consent, wherever safe to do so (Fuller, 2014). Through this research, I sought to be *'the eyes and ears'* and elucidate *'where we are, where we want to go, and what is desirable'* in reflecting on how counsellors work alongside young people when sharing their information (Flyvbjerg, 2001: 166/7). Thus, a range of 'insider' (Etherington, 2000) knowledge, experience, skills, ethics and ideals have reflexively influenced the formation and direction of the case study research of this PhD.

Rationale

Confidentiality is a central consideration for young people when seeking therapeutic help and is frequently named as one of the most valued ingredients of school-based counselling (Chan and Quin, 2012; Prior, 2012; Lynass et al., 2012; Westergaard, 2013). Young people link confidentiality with the freedom to offload concerns, within a non-judgmental relationship (Fox and Butler, 2007; Griffiths, 2013; McArthur et al. 2016). The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) Ethical Framework, the professional guidance that governs the practice of most counsellors, suggests that trust requires counsellors to protect the confidentiality of clients' personal information (BACP, 2018). Developing trustworthy counselling relationships with young people is crucial to therapeutic practice (Everall and Paulson, 2002; Baylis, 2011; Prior, 2012; Westergaard, 2013). Trust is a relational process that involves vulnerability and requires *'a leap of faith'* by clients (Bond, 2015: 14; Forsyth et al., 2011). The value of young people having trustworthy relationships with adults may seem

self-evident. However, a network of counselling theory links the significance of such relationships to processes and outcomes (Norcross, 2002; Cooper, 2008).

There is growing public concern and evidence of increasing levels of emotional ill-health amongst young people in the UK (ONS, 2017). School-based counselling (SBC) has been acknowledged as an effective provision to support young people by all the individual national governments of the UK and has a growing evidence base (Cooper, 2013a). This recognition is revealed through the development of practice guidelines for statutory school settings by the Department of Education (DfE) in England, and mainstream funding for secondary school counselling in Wales and Northern Ireland and an announcement in January 2019 from the Scottish Government to spend £60 million to fund counsellors in all secondary schools (WAG, 2011; DfE, 2016; SG, 2019). Large-scale reviews have highlighted that SBC is one of the most prevalent forms of psychological intervention for young people and is consistently associated with reductions in psychological distress (Hill et al, 2011; Cooper, 2013a; McArthur et al., 2016). SBC offers the opportunity to discuss worries confidentially and aims to promote self-awareness, well-being and develop personal resources to manage problems or cope with change (Hill et al, 2011; McLaughlin, 2014). SBC also plays a significant safeguarding role, giving young people the opportunity to develop a one to one relationship with a trusted adult where they can 'disclose' or reveal previously hidden, abusive or distressing experiences (Jenkins and Polat, 2006; McGinnis, 2008; Jenkins and Palmer, 2012). This is crucial as where young people feel that they can trust their relationships with professionals they are more likely to share their worries, and this is likely to improve their safety (McGinnis, 2008; Cossar, et al., 2014; Lefevre et al, 2017).

Confidentiality is a basic tenet of counselling and is deeply embedded in therapeutic theory, but it is generally limited by the requirement to share information with school Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) where young people are thought to be at risk of harm (McGinnis and Jenkins, 2006; Hill, et al, 2011; DfE, 2016). This meets government and local authority requirements to work together to share information and work within organisational safeguarding protocols (McGinnis and Jenkins, 2006; Hill et al. 2011; H.M. Gov., 2018). It recognizes that young people are regarded as vulnerable and in need of safeguarding because of their developmental stage and structural lack of power, a position supported by professional practice guidelines (Powell and Smith, 2006). The BACP asserts that, where there is a conflict between respecting confidentiality and sharing information to protect young people, safety should take precedence (McGinnis and Jenkins, 2006; BACP, 2016).

This stance echoes twenty years of government policy that has increasingly emphasised schools' responsibility to promote welfare and pass on concerns about harm to other agencies. Poor information sharing has been identified by cumulative child protection reports and serious case reviews which criticised repeated failures of agencies to communicate effectively to prevent the deaths of children, such as Victoria Climbié, Peter Connolly and Hamzah Khan (See Laming Reports, 2003a and 2009; The Bichard Inquiry, 2004; Munro Review of Child Protection, 2011; Sidebotham et al., 2016; HM Gov., 2018). During this time the perceived failures of multi-professional information sharing became a re-occurring focus of public criticism.¹ The term safeguarding was introduced to indicate a more proactive approach to child protection that included wider contextual factors that might impact upon the welfare of children, such as poverty, parental substance abuse, parental mental health and domestic violence (Thompson, 2010). With a remit broader than child protection, and an eye on all the areas that might impact on a young person's safety, safeguarding has become everybody's business (Appelton and Sidebotham, 2018). This resulted in a drive from public policy for different agencies to work together so that the pieces of the jigsaw that different professionals may have access to, can be put together to prevent further horrific child deaths and promote child welfare (HM Gov., 2018). Inter-agency collaboration has become deeply embedded in professional discourse and notions of good practice in statutory agencies such as schools (McGinnis and Jenkins, 2011; Jenkins and Palmer, 2012). These developments raise questions about whether this collaborative approach, with its emphasis on the multi-agency sharing of information about a wider range of issues, potentially undermines young peoples' perception of school-based counselling as confidential (Hamilton-Roberts, 2012; Jenkins and Palmer, 2012).

If confidentiality promotes trustworthy relationships where clients feel safe to explore difficult experiences, how *do* school counsellors endeavour to maintain this trust when sharing safety concerns with other professionals? This is especially sensitive as disclosure and subsequent safeguarding processes may be experienced as a time of increased anxiety and vulnerability for young people (Sanders and Mace, 2006; Jobe and Gorin, 2013). There is currently very little counselling research about what happens when safety concerns over-ride

¹ It is beyond the scope of this thesis to trace the historical development of information sharing practice (See Thompson, 2010).

young clients' confidentiality (Jenkins, 2010; Jenkins and Palmer, 2012). Significantly, none of the research yet available includes the views of young people. Further research in this area is essential if counsellors are going to be successful in maintaining therapeutic relationships with young people who may be experiencing the double vulnerability of being at risk and being subject to adult safeguarding processes, over which they may feel they have little control (Emanuel, 2002; Cossar et al., 2011). To be effective and legitimate, such research requires the unique insider knowledge and contextual understanding that young people bring to this ethically complex intersection between counselling and safeguarding (Kellet, 2010; Manning, 2012). There is also a need for more research into the perceptions of SBC and linked education staff, if such services are to be further embedded in school cultures (Fox and Butler, 2009; Hill, et al., 2011; Hamilton-Roberts, 2012; Pybis et al., 2012). In this age of information sharing, it is vital that SBCs understand how best to work alongside young people to retain trust in the relationships, on which both therapeutic outcomes, and effective safeguarding depend.

Project Summary

The research which forms this thesis comprises a case study, which aimed to capture different perspectives on how school counsellors navigate relationships with young people and maintain trust in alliances, when sharing young people's information because of safety concerns. It was based at the Place2Be, the largest school counselling agency in the UK (Place2Be, 2016; Flyvbjerg, 2001). It sought to capture a holistic picture of information sharing practice through illuminating the different perspectives of young people (10), school counsellors (6) and Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) (2) who are the main school conduits of safeguarding information in schools (Yin, 2009; Stake, 2005). The fieldwork took place in six secondary schools in England and Scotland. In an iterative, recursive process I undertook a combination of semi-structured and interactive group interviews that used a fictional information vignette as stimulation for discussion, filming the professionals' views on the vignette for the young people to critique subsequently.

Research Approach: A Phronetic Case Study

I was keen to avoid the limitations of methodological approaches that do not allow relational and subjective influences to be elucidated. I have been influenced by criticisms of the over-

emphasis on technical rationality in professional practice and literature that explores the role of affect and dialogic relationships in contingent decision-making across a range of contexts (See *Eisner, 2002; Polkinhorne, 2004; Schleifer and Vannatta, 2011; Robbins, 2012; Florian and Graham, 2014; Russell and Greenhalgh, 2014*). This led me to the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis*, often translated as ‘practical wisdom’, which has been re-imagined by Flyvbjerg (2001; 2012) to highlight the intrinsic value of case study within social science research and to incorporate a postmodern recognition of local relations of power (Thomas, 2010). This project’s *phronetic* stance was reflexive, contextual and sought to illuminate the deliberations and ‘practical wisdom’ and expertise of its participants/groups (Flyvbjerg, 2001). There is developing recognition of the potential for *phronesis* to progress contextual and reflexive research within counselling (See Smythe, MacCulloch, and Charmley, 2009; Holliday, 2016; Fuller and Holliday, 2016; Wyatt, 2017), but its use in counselling research remains nascent at the time of writing. As such, the learning about how to employ *phronesis*, and its advantages and pitfalls, is one of the original contributions of this thesis.

A Relational Integrative Foundation

I have been guided by Yin’s (2010) assertion that case study validity is supported by explicitly embedding its development in pre-existing theory. My therapeutic practice is based on a relational integrative framework and incorporates a range of theoretical stances including Person Centred/humanistic, ecosystemic, psychodynamic, and narrative ideas. What connects these diverse orientations are two central tenets, that relationships are at the heart of emotional health and therefore counselling, and that people inhabit social worlds which they both construct and are constructed by (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Yalom, 1989; Frosh, 2003; Norcross and Goldfield, 2005; Finlay, 2015). These theoretical perspectives were highly influential in the conceptualization and analysis of this research.

Both *integrative* and *relational* are contested terms that are used in a variety of ways and in different contexts and professions (Finlay, 2015). *Relational* is associated with adaptations of post Freudian psychodynamic, self-psychology, attachment and object-relations theory. Relational approaches focus on the early evolution of inner working models of self and relationships, as revealed through the therapeutic relationship (Winnicott 1965a; Ainsworth, 1979; Kohut, 1984; Bowlby, 1988). More latterly, these ideas also connect with affect-regulation research and its application in psychotherapeutic practice (Schoore, 2003a, 2012;

Fonagy et al., 2004; Gerhardt, 2004). This focus on therapeutic relationships as reparative resonates with Person Centred theory and the core conditions considered necessary for therapeutic change: unconditional positive regard, empathy, congruence and psychological contact between client and counsellor (Rogers, 1957; Mearns and Thorne, 2000). As such, the term 'relational' highlights the intersubjective space between client and counsellor and requires the counsellor to be psychologically present, aware of the socio-cultural context and with the client first and foremost, as an authentic human being (Buber, 1971; Finlay, 2015).

Relational ideas have influenced my research themes. For example, my belief in the primary efficacy of the therapeutic relationship has shaped my emphasis on the impact of information sharing on alliances with young people. Theoretical ideas from object-relations about containment have influenced parts of my data analysis (Bion, 1970). Person Centred ideas about authentic and respectful relationships have widely influenced my approach to fieldwork and participants and supported my theory building (Rogers, 1957). If the 'walls and roof' of this project are constructed by a phronetic approach to case study, my integrative relational framework is the theoretical foundation on which this project is built.

Note: Within this thesis, I have used the term relational to encapsulate the framework of ideas discussed above.

Research Questions

This thesis is concerned with how counsellors and young people navigate therapeutic relationships and trust during information sharing. It sought to uncover the practices and conditions that may help young people to retain their trust in therapeutic alliances in those situations when their right to confidentiality is being superseded by their right to be protected. My over-arching research theme focused on participants' perceptions and contextual knowledge of the following:

- 1. How do young people and school-based counsellors navigate relationships in the context of safeguarding information sharing?**
- 2. What are the implications for maintaining trust in working alliances with young people?**

Within this theme, I explored the following:

- 3. What processes support trust in relationships with young people?**

4. What factors facilitate or impede school counsellors' ability to maintain working alliances with young people through information sharing processes?

Finally, I sought to explore and amalgamate the phronesis of my research participants to consider the following:

5. How do the dis/connections between the practical wisdom of young people and professionals (SBCs and DSLs) contribute to school counselling practice knowledge in this area?

Research Questions 1 and 2 highlighted views on how school counsellors and young people find ways to negotiate their relationships when information is shared. I sought to give young people a platform to discuss how they perceive their differing rights to confidentiality and protection and whether they necessarily see them as contradictory (Alderson and Morrow, 2008). This raised complex feelings about whether trust may be developed by counsellors taking clients' safety seriously and acting to promote it, or whether sharing information was perceived as a breach of trust (Mainey et al., 2009). It also illuminated reflections on the experience of power and control during safeguarding processes and whether young people valued participatory practices.

Research Question 3 was designed to offer young people and professionals the opportunity to suggest specific helpful practices and ways of relating to clients during school counsellor information sharing.

Research Question 4 was designed to explore the impact of contexts, professional relationships and affective responses on counsellor's information sharing practice and whether these factors served to facilitate or impede the trust in alliances with young people.

Research Question 5 considered how the conversations in the data between young people, DSLs and counsellors and the dis/connects that emerged, contributed to a theory of practice in school counselling information sharing.

Note on terms and scope

This thesis is mostly situated within SBC, but its focus on information sharing involved exploring literature from allied academic areas and professional literature, most notably social work and education.

School-based Counsellor: The terms *counsellor* or *school counsellor* or *school-based counsellor* (SBC) were used to describe therapeutic practitioners who work in schools. However, many professionals who fulfil this role have other designations and training, including psychotherapist, art therapist, play therapist and psychotherapeutic counsellor. I also used the term psychotherapy to denote the theoretical formulations that underpin the practice of counsellors.

Information sharing: Information is shared from counselling sessions for a variety of purposes. However, within this thesis, I used *information sharing* specifically to denote passing on material from sessions where there are concerns about client safety. Information sharing for other purposes has been specifically indicated in the text.

Young People: I used the term *young people* to describe those of secondary school age 11-18. Under eighteens are legally minors, for whom legislation enshrines their rights to be safeguarded (DfE, 2018). I recognise debates exist in academic and professional literature concerning the use of the word *child* or *young person*, which includes selecting *child* to describe adolescents to emphasise the structural vulnerabilities they face and champion their continued rights to protection from abuse and exploitation (Hickle and Hallet, 2016; Lefevre et al, 2017). My choice of *young people* reflected a concern to use respectful and unpatronizing terminology that foregrounds capabilities, and insight (Uprichard, 2007). I sometimes used *child* to denote the generic policies and rights that impact the lives of both children and young people.

Presentation of this Thesis

This thesis proceeds as follows: -

Chapter 2: Trust and Professional Relationships with Young People

This chapter considers definitions of trust and its role in the therapeutic relationship, theorizing confidentiality and considering attachment and object-relations perspectives on the origins of trust. This leads to an exploration of the role of participation in promoting trust in safeguarding practice and an examination of debates about young people's diverse rights.

Chapter 3: The Affective and Relational Context to School Counsellor Information Sharing

This chapter explores school counselling information sharing and its relational and affective context, using psychodynamic and phronetic frameworks. This includes an examination of the influence of affect and emotions on how a range of professionals, work with young people during safeguarding processes.

Chapter 4: A Methodology for Researching Practical Wisdom in School Counsellor Information Sharing

This chapter explores phronesis and its epistemological relevance for exploring school counsellor information sharing. I also describe my 'Phronetic Bricolage' approach (Trnavcevic and Biloslavo, 2017)

Chapter 5: 'A Polyphony of Voices'²: The Research Process

This chapter details my iterative case study design and processes and considers the methodological implications of choosing the Place2Be for this case study before setting out my reflexive and ethical positioning. I also outline my thematic and narrative stages of analysis.

Chapter 6: Findings 1: Thematic Analysis.

This chapter explores themes that arise across and between the participants/groups and develops research conversations between them. This is followed by theory building, which formulates counsellor *availability* through information sharing.

Chapter 7: Findings 2: Narratives of availability and containment.

This chapter considers three detailed narratives from counsellor participants, exploring how the relational and affective context of information sharing impacts upon counsellor *availability*. There is a focus on professional relationships with safeguarding leads. This is followed by a reflective commentary on the phronesis of the participants/groups.

Chapter 8: The Trust is the Work: Discussion.

This chapter critically reflects on my findings exploring how these ideas may be theorized and outlines the unique contribution of this thesis.

Chapter 9: The Trust is the Work-A Conclusion.

² Flyvbjerg, 2001:139

The concluding chapter details the implications for practice from my findings, outlining the limitations of this case study and the opportunities it raises for further research. It also includes a commentary on the impact of this thesis, detailing how it won a research award and funding, to make a film about this project. I close with a reflexive commentary.

Chapter 2: Trust and Professional Relationships with Young People

Introduction

“Without the act of trust, counselling is impossible” (Bond, 2015:15).

Trust is essential to develop counselling relationships and therefore crucial to school counsellors' work with young people (Bond, 2015; Everall and Paulson 2002). Trust is also pivotal to safeguarding as it facilitates young people's disclosure of their real worries and concerns (Munro, 2011; Cossar et al., 2014; Lefevre et al., 2017). In this section, I outline the role of trust in therapeutic relationships and working alliances and consider how these influence counselling outcomes. This will include theory about the function of confidentiality in developing trust in alliances. I discuss ideas from object-relations, attachment, and affect-regulation theory to consider developmental perspectives on the origins of trust in relationships. This will lead to a comparative exploration of research on the role of trust and participatory practices in safeguarding. I go on to explore the role of trust in counselling ethics and then consider the academic and professional debates in relation to young people's diverse rights to safety, protection, autonomy and confidentiality. I begin by discussing conceptions of trust and their relevance to young people in schools and safeguarding.

Reflections on Trust, Interdependence and Vulnerability

Even though trust/mistrust is central to human experience, it is intangible and difficult to define (Van Maele et al., 2014). Mishra (1996) suggests how a range of social science disciplines seek to define trust, resulting in multi-dimensional formulations. These highlight the expectation of positive behaviours, attitudes, personality traits, co-operation between individuals, or explicit agreements. At a simple level, trust implies that the actions (and/or words) of another can be relied upon and in this sense, trust is a relational process.

Trust involves vulnerability, uncertainty about outcomes and potential loss (Rosseau, 1998; Coleman, 1990). A positive expectation is placed on the trusted individual to behave with

integrity or benevolence. This, in turn, draws out the interdependence of relationships of trust. Forsyth et al. (2011: 18) defines trust as:

'A condition in which people... find themselves vulnerable to others under conditions of risk and interdependence'.

This mutuality of the human condition requires trust in others, but in turn creates vulnerability and potential precarity in relationships. People may let you down or not meet your expectations. Butler (2004) illuminates how precarity encompasses not just vulnerability in human and affective connections, but also precariousness to structural and social organizations and the people who run them. Such concepts may be particularly apposite to young people during information sharing where their vulnerability centres not just on their safety, but also being subject to adult safeguarding processes over which they may experience little control (Sanders and Mace, 2006). Boddy, Bakketeig and Østergaard (2019) adapt ideas from Butler (2004) and Brigley Thompson (2018), to develop the concept of 'precarious moments' in the lived experience of children in care. This idea may be equally pertinent to the vulnerability young people may experience during safeguarding processes that arise from school based counselling (SBC). Young people need to risk trusting not just the professional, to whom they have disclosed, but also the surrounding systems and context.

Trust as a Contextual Experience

Rosseau (1998) argues that trust is a context-specific experience so that an individual's experience of trust is determined by different environments and institutions. Trust may be different in schools than in other contexts as the environment shapes how trust is experienced. The roles played by individuals and expectations of that role's characteristics, responsibilities and obligations, may also shape trust reactions (Blau, 1986; Bryk and Schneider, 2002). A young person's expectation of trust in a teacher may have a different quality to that in a counsellor because they have different expectations of these professionals. Young people expect confidentiality from counsellors but not necessarily from teachers (Chan and Quinn, 2011). Teachers and counsellors have different theoretical, cultural and professional backgrounds which contribute to different expectations around trustworthiness (Music, 2008; Hamilton-Roberts, 2012; Fuller, 2014). According to Bryk and Schneider (2002) for example; integrity, competence, personal regard and respect are lenses through which education staff assess trustworthiness within school contexts. Hoy and Tschannen-Moran

(1999) review teachers' perceptions of trust and highlight five facets of trustworthiness that include competence, benevolence, reliability, honesty and openness. This suggests, teachers may specifically view sharing information as a facet of openness and interdependence, and hence trust. Forsyth et al. (2011) suggest these five qualities also influence the trust experienced by young people for education staff, but this requires further research.

I have described trust as arising from our human interdependence. To trust encompasses an expectation of positive behaviour that involves the person who trusts in vulnerability, risk and sometimes precarity. I have also suggested that the experience of trust depends on context and the expectations one has of the role of the person you are trusting. These important background themes continue through this thesis.

I now continue by exploring psychotherapeutic theory about the role of trust in counselling relationships with young people.

Counselling Relationships and Trust

'For many young people relationships of trust with adults in their lives may be in short supply' (Westergaard, 2013:103).

The significance of trust is illuminated across a range of studies that explore young people's views of counselling (Everall and Paulson, 2002; Fox and Butler, 2007; Baylis, 2011; Prior, 2012; Westergaard, 2013). It may seem intrinsic that trust is important in any sort of relationship with young people. However, I propose that a network of counselling theory links the significance of trusting relationships to processes and outcomes with young people.

Bond defines trust in counselling as, *'... striving to form a relationship of sufficient quality and resilience to withstand the challenges arising from difference, inequality, risk and uncertainty'* (Bond, 2015; 244). The emphasis on resilience here may be particularly pertinent to the demands placed on the counselling relationship when sharing information because of safety concerns. Trust in counselling is associated with several highly interconnected factors:

1. The importance of developing an empathic and accepting relationship as an emotionally corrective experience.
2. The need to develop a positive bond and working alliance that includes shared understandings of the purpose and goals of the counselling.

3. The role of confidentiality in promoting trust, which allows for the sharing of painful or shameful material.

I take each of these aspects in turn in order to highlight the connections between trust, the counselling relationship, confidentiality and outcomes in working therapeutically with young people.

The Role of Acceptance and Empathy in Counselling Relationships

The role of the counselling relationship is regarded by many as the key factor affecting the process and outcomes of counselling (Cooper, 2008; McLaughlin et al., 2013). Person Centred theory argues that distress is exacerbated by losing touch with an authentic understanding of our feelings and needs and being driven instead by external factors that cause '*conditions of worth*' and hence only feeling valued when meeting the demands of significant people in our environment (Rogers, 1957; Mearns and Thorne, 2007; Prever, 2010). The therapeutic relationship is an opportunity to have a corrective relational experience where a young person can feel understood by an adult who is offering empathy, authenticity, and an accepting, non-judgmental attitude. This experience allows the client to develop an '*internal locus of control*', or self-determination. Rogers (1957) terms these relational qualities 'the core conditions' which form the bedrock of what many school counsellors deem to be efficacious in counselling (McArthur, 2016). The practice implications of Person Centred theory have been widely recognised by other modalities in contemporary counselling and there is a general acceptance of the importance of relational qualities in therapeutic work, although other orientations contest the primacy of the relationship to positive outcomes (Kahn, 1997; Holliday, 2014).

Trust and Working Alliances

Trust is widely associated with the development of the working alliance in counselling relationships (Horvath and Bedi, 2000; Hatcher, 2010). This involves three elements:

1. The affective bond: a positive relationship between the client and counsellor, including trust, acceptance and confidence.
2. Goals: agreed outcomes and priorities.

3. Tasks: the collaborative effort and commitment between the young person and counsellor on this work (Bordin, 1979; Gelso and Hayes, 2007).

Bordin's (1979) seminal tripartite model of the working alliance emphasises the balance between collaboration on the tasks and goals of therapy and the bond, that includes elements of trust, acceptance and confidence. Others, such as Horvath and Luborsky (1993) support the focus on both the collaborative *and* affective elements of the alliance. The idea of the importance of the bond in counselling can be traced back to Freud's description of the unconscious projection by 'patients' onto the therapist of affectionate aspects of relationships from their past (cited in Horvath and Luborsky, 1993). Freud and other psychoanalytic workers later came to believe that there were real-life elements to this bond that supports the work of the therapy. This operates through a combination of unconscious projections and conscious hopes and goals for the therapy, which are brought together through the working alliance. Freud believed this process to be the main driver of therapeutic change (Freud, A, cited in Lanyado and Horne, 2009). Many have critiqued psychoanalytic formulations of the significance of unconscious projections and transferences in therapeutic change. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore this in depth, but in brief, these criticisms focus on the importance of acknowledging the real experiences of trauma (such as child sexual abuse) as more helpful and respectful to the client than focusing on unconscious projections and fantasy (Miller, 1990; Herman, 2015;). Later, Person Centred and humanist theorists such as Rogers moved away from ideas about using transferences from past relationships and focused instead on the efficacy of the 'real relationship' element of this bond in therapeutic change (1957).

Campbell and Simmonds' (2011) study reveals that two-thirds of the 53 child and adolescent therapists they surveyed rated the strength of the affective bond as the most important element in counselling outcomes. The bond is associated with ideas from object-relations theory and attachment theory, respectively. There is an emphasis on creating a '*good-enough*' relationship between client and counsellor, which forms a '*secure base*' necessary to 'do the counselling work' which may involve exploring difficult material (Winnicott, 1965a; Bowlby, 1988). Both ideas denote something of the need for safety and importantly, trust in the relationship. Young people need to feel understood and liked to develop trust and this in turn influences the degree of collaboration that can be achieved and what counselling work can be done (Holliday, 2014). DiGiuseppe et al. (1996) gives greater emphasis to the role of goals and tasks in therapy with young people. In contrast, Warmpold and Imel's (2015) large scale

review of efficacy studies in adult psychotherapy suggests that effectiveness is most associated with the nature of relationships with individual practitioners. Although, there are those that have questioned the significance of the working alliance to counselling outcomes (see Beutler et al., 2004; Cooper, 2010; Feltham, 2010), there is convincing evidence that the working alliance with young people is a significant predictor of good outcomes (Norcross, 2002; Cooper, 2008 McLaughlin et al. 2013). Everall and Paulson (2002) claim that an egalitarian feel to this collaboration is a significant factor in reinforcing young people's engagement in the therapeutic process. For example:

Kathy: *"Trust... He was helping me, but he wasn't giving me advice. He was letting me think for myself and that was really nice."* (Everall and Paulson, 2002: 83)

This study asserts that *'overcoming distrust and forging a therapeutic alliance is the first order of business for therapists when engaging young people'* (Everall and Paulson, 2002: 84).

Alliances with young people may take longer to develop than with adults but establishing such collaborative trust may be vital (Shirk and Karver, 2003; Binder et al., 2008; Baylis, 2011; Prior, 2012). Young people often referred by adults may initially enter counselling warily, unsure of what it entails (Prior, 2012; Campbell and Simmonds, 2011; Lynass et al., 2012). Baylis' (2011) study involving younger children (aged 6-12) emphasises how initially counsellors need to concentrate on the bond element of the alliance, termed *Alliance Dependent Behaviours*. These include active listening, being child-focused, expressing caring and doing activities to develop the working alliance before moving on to *Alliance Expectant Behaviours* such as validating feelings and problem solving. Drop-out rates are often higher with young people than with adult populations (Kazdin, 1996). Some studies suggest that mistrust may be the starting point for some young people and this needs to be overcome through a gradual evolution of the therapeutic bond with the counsellor (Shirk and Karver, 2003; Baylis, 2011).

Ideas from the studies discussed above illuminate how developing trust in alliances with young people is a key task for any counsellor. Without trust, young people may not choose to attend counselling, or it may be ineffective. This factor is particularly significant for those clients in SBC who can be vulnerable and more likely to evoke safeguarding concerns. Such young people may have had little reason to trust adults in the past (Hallett, 2015; Mathews and Collin-Vezina et al., 2016). If trust is formulated through an ongoing relational process,

the way in which professionals work alongside young people during information sharing becomes a critical test of trust and perhaps a crucial opportunity to demonstrate trustworthiness.

Psychosocial, Object-Relations and Attachment Perspectives on Trust

If interpersonal-trust (trust in others) is an interdependent and reciprocal phenomenon, then past experiences are likely to influence current experiences of trust (Mayer et al. 1995; Kramer 1999). This suggests that past relationships will influence how young people experience mis/trust through safeguarding processes. Corriveau and Harris (2009) suggest that by three years of age, most children will display greater trust towards an adult who has previously given them accurate information rather than one whose communication has shown to be less reliable. This suggests that children learn not to trust everyone equally in early childhood.

I now turn to briefly capture what psychosocial development, object-relations, attachment, and affect regulation theories contribute to ideas about trust. This is an extremely broad field; therefore, I intend to introduce into this thesis some illuminating ideas about trust from these perspectives rather than attempt any substantive review.

Erikson's seminal (1963) eight-stage theory of psychosocial identity formation suggests that an infant's experience of mis/trust in the first two years of life influences all subsequent development. Erikson asserts that the resulting mis/trust balance *'helps create the basis for the most essential overall outlook on life, namely, hope. . .'* (Erikson et al., 1963: 33). Children need to learn to trust themselves and the world, but also to determine whom and what to mistrust. Erikson (1963) proposes that the integration (or crisis) of these opposing experiences (mis/trust) offers a virtue or strength (hope) that forms a relational template on which subsequent development rests (Stevens, 2008). Erikson has been erroneously critiqued for describing a fixed age-stage approach to development, whereas he in fact emphasises the mutable, interrelated, over-lapping and recurring nature of psychosocial stages and their associated themes and polarities (Saccagi, 2015, in Knight, 2017). These ideas formulate trust as a core developmental achievement regardless of when this arises within a person's life-course. Equally, Erikson emphasises that trust emerges from both integration of inner conflicts, and from how trust is supported or damaged by children's social and relational

contexts. Knight (2017) links Erikson's ideas about mis/trust and the development of hope, to theory and research about the working alliance. Knight (2017) draws parallels between Erikson's model and relational approaches and illuminates that without trust and hope the therapeutic process is likely to stagnate. According to these ideas trust in the alliance cannot help but be linked to earlier experiences and resolutions of the mis/trust polarity. The job of the therapist is to support the re-occurring developmental resolution of mis/trust as a relationship theme and to establish hope for new experiences.

Object-relations theorists describe the development of trust in early infancy. For this body of thinkers, interpersonal trust is internalised through care-giving relationships where there is adequate or 'good enough' sensitivity on the part of the primary care giver (Winnicott, 1965a). Such sensitivity eventually allows the infant to depend on the holding environment and begin to develop a sense of self that is separate from caregivers and others. This holding environment is not simply literal, but also speaks to the psychological availability of the primary care provider who is able to keep the infant 'in mind' (Bomber, 2007). Winnicott formulates the space between the infant and caregiver as a symbolic transitional space that is set apart, a third area of human living, one neither inside the individual nor outside in the world of shared reality (Winnicott, 2012). These ideas were later developed and formed the building blocks of conceptions of inter-subjectivity. This refers to the ongoing influence of the subjective experience of one person to another and interlink with ideas about reciprocity, or mutuality in interrelationships (Stern, 1985; Douglas, 2007). Reciprocity is described as the ability to influence the structure of communication and is closely associated with later psychotherapeutic ideas about intersubjectivity, attunement and affect-regulation (Stern, 1985; Trevarthen and Aitken, 2001; Douglas, 2007)³. Winnicott (1965a) argues that without this holding environment, infants experience fragmentation, which contributes to the evolution of a false self to prevent further psychic pain. False selves may be unconscious and are analogous of masks that prevent people from authentic self-expression, leaving an individual full of unmet needs, which makes it difficult to trust others or ourselves. This suggests the ability to trust and rely on this early holding environment is linked to being able

³ See Douglas (2007) for an exploration of the subtly differing emphasis of these named terms associated with reciprocity.

to integrate a separate sense of self and manage internal processes and make good trusting connections with others. I now turn to a discussion of attachment and its role in trust.

In early infancy, human beings are completely dependent on their innate capacity to relate or 'attach' to care-givers as part of a baby's evolutionary survival instinct (Trevarthen and Aitken, 2001; Howe, 2012). Attachment theorists such as Ainsworth, Main and Bowlby built on the work of the Robertsons (1952) whose ethnographic research observed the distress of young children separated from their parents. Bowlby applied these ideas to formulate attachment theory which suggests that children have a strong drive to seek proximity to their primary carer to provide physical and psychological safety (Bowlby, 1969). Attachment behaviour includes children showing signs of distress and protest on separation. Ainsworth (1979) designed the strange situation experiment through which she determined different patterns of attachment behaviour. Securely attached infants were formulated as having internalised a secure attachment, which encompassed an expectation of the capacity of their carer to meet their needs and soothe distress or quieten powerful feelings. Consequently, these children developed an 'internal working model' of the reliability of adults to meet their needs and of themselves as a self 'worthy' of being taken care of (Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, 1979). These ideas suggest securely attached children take forward an expectation of others as reliable available and trustworthy, whilst insecure children may view themselves as 'unworthy' and expect adults to be unreliable, unresponsive and untrustworthy. The latter may lead to forms of insecure attachment formulated by Ainsworth (1979).

There have been many sociological and methodological criticisms of attachment theory. For example, Contratto (2002) and Morris (2008) criticise the idealisation of the responsive availability of mothers, and Cleary (1999) who points to the lack of nuanced understanding regarding non-western cultural practices involved in attachment assessments. Keller's study (2013) highlights the different expectations of children's autonomy in western and non-western countries, noting the multiplicity of significant relationships in a child's life, which elucidates that attachment hierarchies are not culturally universal. Despite this, the empirical basis of attachment theory and significance of early relationships, relational security and trust has been robustly established across a wide range of countries and cultures (Lefevre, 2018). Winnicott's (1965a) ideas about holding environments and attachment theory have had a profound impact on many professional practices with children and young people and has

been deeply influential in the development of social work, childcare, and counselling theory and practice.

Early manifestations of Bowlby's (1969) work have been criticised for a reliance on the idea of 'an internal working model' of relationships and of the 'self' with a lack of research evidence to corroborate this assertion (Pietromonaco and Barnett, 2000). His later work emphasises the lifelong process of attachment relationships influenced by endless interactions of internal and external factors (Bowlby, 1999). Later attachment theorists and affect-regulation researchers moved to a broad agreement that internal working models of relationships can be confirmed or disconfirmed at any stage in the life course, and that adolescence offers a fertile opportunity for such changes (Cozolino, 2006; Howe, 2012). Developments in neuroscience describe how the structures of the brain are impaired by neglect, maltreatment and inadequate care in early life in a way that impacts the ability of individuals to regulate their feelings and affect and to develop empathy for others (See Schore, 2003a; Gerhardt, 2004; Cozolino, 2006). Jaffe et al. (2001) argue that the alternating flow of such mutual exchange form part of the building blocks of secure attachment relationships. The implication of this body of research is that children need a relationship with an empathic adult to be able to manage their emotional experiences (Holliday, 2014). This has led to a resurgence of interest in this area and a linking of the theory and application of psychodynamic ideas about attachment and object relations, with research into neurological development and affect regulation (see Schore, 2012).

These theories pose questions about how the actions of counsellors may be dis/confirming young people's internal blueprints of adults as trustworthy. They illuminate the influence of early relationships, feelings around un/worthiness and how these could influence young people's reactions and trust when information sharing. This raises the therapeutic risks and opportunities of school counsellors' practice during safeguarding processes (Reeves, 2015). Are there unique opportunities in terms of helping young people to internalise greater security through experiencing relationships of trust, at such times?

Trust and Confidentiality

The word confidentiality originated from the Latin '*confidere*' sometimes translated as '*strong trust*' (Bond, 2015). If an expectation of confidentiality is a key consideration for young people

in seeking therapeutic help (LeSurf and Lynch, 1999; Boulton et al., 2007; Fox and Butler, 2007), how does this interconnect with trust in the therapeutic relationship?

To answer this question, I consider the origins of confidentiality in the early development of psychoanalytic theory. The roots of confidentiality in counselling are embedded in the development of psychoanalysis as the *talking cure*. Freud's original principle of 'free association' or '*freie Einfall*' encourages 'patients' to discuss openly whatever comes into their mind with their therapist (1938/1940 in Kris, 2013). Freud outlined his belief in the unconscious repression of traumatic or conflicted material from early childhood and that this repression leads to later mental ill-health (Jacobs, 2004). He maintained that talking candidly with their therapists about repressed feelings enabled *patients* to feel better. This process relies on two practice assumptions:

1. That the therapist keeps this material entirely private.
2. That the therapist remains neutral and refrains from judgement.

Psychoanalytic theory regards these factors as necessary to facilitate full disclosure and argues that continual repetition of this process alters the structure of patients' ego-formulation (Strachey, 1969). Introjected, or internalised parental judgements (imagoes) in the super-ego are eventually replaced by the more accepting reactions of the therapist by way of the transference or projection onto the therapist as an alternate parental figure (Strachey, 1969). This theory suggests that patients were freed by this process from their shame, guilt and fears. Later workers formulate confidentiality and the non-judgmental demeanour on the part of the therapist as part of the secure *frame* of counselling which also include therapist consistency and anonymity (Casement, 2013). Gray (2013) suggests that maintaining this secure frame communicated that the therapist is consistent, reliable and most importantly, trustworthy. Bond (2015: 155) emphasises the levels of trust necessary for clients to attain the '*levels of personal truthfulness necessary to address the issues that are causing them concern*'.

Person Centred theory in contrast, draws on existentialism and focuses on counsellors attending to the moment by moment in the *here and now* of sessions rather than early experiences (Means and Thorne, 2007; Clarkson and Cavicchia, 2013). This theory also highlights the importance of counsellors communicating a non-judgmental and accepting approach to clients as a corrective relational experience that works against 'conditions of worth', described earlier (Rogers, 1957; Mearns and Thorne, 2007). These arise out of

judgmental messages in a person's environment so that young people may only feel acceptable if they obey these introjects, such as 'I must be good and not get angry'. Person Centred theory suggests that practitioners should instead maintain an accepting stance to support clients to develop an 'internal locus of control' (Mearns and Thorne, 2007).

The ideas discussed above come from divergent modalities but contribute to a picture of how trust in counselling relationships connect with ideas about confidentiality, and neutrality. Both give credence to the importance of feeling safe in order to express difficult material. Daniels and Jenkins (2010) assert that when counselling young people, therapists are not only dealing with the past parental introjects but also, current parents with real life authority and power over clients' lives. They argue that young people will need to test therapist neutrality and confidentiality over several occasions before they will be believed. This assertion is supported by other counselling research (see Prior, 2012; Baylis, 2011; Westergaard, 2013). Bond (2015) asserts that this testing out of counsellors' trustworthiness is common to all age clients. However, Baylis' study involving seven participants age 6-12 suggests that

'Confidentiality from an adult's perspective may be assumed, while its status with a child needs to be clarified and demonstrated appropriately (Baylis, 2011:91).

Daniels and Jenkins (2010) argue that when counsellors decide that young people's information needs to be shared, they have undermined the *neutrality*, as well as the *confidentiality* of the sessions. They assert, by engaging in the non - consensual sharing of information counsellors run the risk of being perceived as belonging to a body of authority figures such as parents, teachers and social workers. Instead of providing an alternative neutral, supportive super-ego there is a danger that they become aligned with the internal judgmental introjects of the young client. This changes the rules of the therapy and potentially undermines a key element of what makes the counselling therapeutic i.e. its neutrality, privacy and confidentiality (Daniels and Jenkins, 2010). I accept the logic of their argument but not their solution of absolute confidentiality because of the danger it poses for young people, as well as the professional careers of counsellors who may be lone mental health professionals in schools. Like others, I have argued instead for an approach to information sharing based on seeking informed consent wherever possible and transparency (McGinnis, 2008; Fuller, 2014; Bond, 2015). This approach accords with other professional guidance in SBC, for example from the Welsh Government (Hill et al., 2011). This can be achieved ethically by gaining informed consent from young clients for counsellors to share information with

school staff. However, complex processes and intentions surround young people's disclosures and it is not always possible to obtain consent to share their confidences (McElvaney, 2014). This poses the question of whether counsellors who share information from counselling sessions without consent damage both the trust, and therapeutic value of the counselling? This project is therefore, an attempt to solve my own professional dilemma of how to both maintain trust in alliances, and the secure therapeutic frame, when sharing information to safeguard young people (Gray, 2013). Below, I take forward ideas about confidentiality and apply them in the context of school counselling.

Application of Confidentiality in Counselling Young People

School counselling practice guidelines assert that the role of confidentiality is to create safe and trustworthy therapeutic relationships where young people feel able to explore difficult feelings and thoughts (Hill et al. 2011; BACP, 2012). The most recent guidelines from the Department of Education are as follows:

Ensuring confidentiality between the child or young person and counsellor is crucial to the success of the relationship and the outcomes of counselling. (DfE, 2016)

Research into young people's views often heralds confidentiality as one of the most valued ingredients of school-based counselling (Fox and Butler, 2007; Cooper, 2006b; Lynass, Pykhtina and Cooper, 2012). Chan and Quinn's (2012) large scale mixed method study suggests that fears that counselling may not be really be confidential is ranked as the main reason why some young people would not attend. Baylis' (2011) points to a direct link between confidentiality, and trust in counselling young people where the former lessens clients' sense of exposure, especially if the material is sensitive or potentially shameful.

Confidentiality contributes to feelings of containment, where feelings are acknowledged, empathically reflected, and held within a safe relationship (Bion, 1970). This process supports the regulation of affect and of lowering arousal (Bion, 1970; Schore, 2003a). Developmental psychological approaches suggest that adolescence is marked by self-consciousness as young people, in the process of forming their adult identity may fear unwanted intrusion (Erikson, 1963; Frankel, 1998). This fear may be particularly marked for those young people who have experienced abuse or exploitation as there may already be a sense of intrusion or violation of their core self (Hughes, 2009). Such young people are likely to be amongst referrals to school

counsellors (Cooper, 2013). Stern defines the ‘core self’ as “*the sense of being an integrated, distinct, coherent body with control over [his] own actions, ownerships of [his] own affectivity, a sense of continuity, and a sense of others as distinct and separate*’ (Stern, 1985: 99). The invasions of abuse not only disrupt a young person’s bodily integrity, but also their sense of internal integration and of themselves as separate and agentic. Young people with such experiences are likely to be sensitive to unwanted exposure or the use of adult power as they may fear being tricked or manipulated (Finkelhor, 1984; Goelitz and Stewart-Kahn, 2013). These are the exact young people who are most likely to have information passed on from counselling sessions. Indeed, some research suggests that the idea of confidentiality may mediate some initial fears that young clients have about sharing their experiences. Thus, Prior’s (2012) study outlines how some young people will hold back from sharing material they judge as exposing, whilst they assess the counsellor’s trustworthiness in keeping material confidential.

In this exploration of the relationship between trust and confidentiality in counselling theory, I have outlined how confidentiality attracts young people to counselling because of the sense of freedom from judgement and exposure it offers. I now consider the relationship between trust and counselling ethics and how these interact with ideas about confidentiality and information sharing.

Trust and Counselling Ethics

The concept of trust is interconnected with ethics in counselling. Without trust, clients may fear exposure and would likely be unwilling to share material with sufficient frankness to make therapeutic progress (West, 2002). Professional ethics originate from moral philosophy and are therefore concerned with the logics of determining good and bad action (Bond, 2015; Proctor, 2014). Counselling ethics are influenced by the history of biomedical ethics that draw on a wide range of philosophical traditions each of which emphasise different priorities (see Figure 1 below).

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the philosophical positions that underpin each approach⁴. Each idea could contribute to generating trust in practitioners. Feminist scholars

⁴ See Proctor (2014) for a discussion of the history of moral philosophy and its application to the ethics of counselling and psychotherapy practice.

such as Noddings (1984) critique the individualistic stance of moral philosophy and emphasises the interdependence of the human condition and the ‘ethic of care’ people have in relationships with others. Postmodern and narrative approaches see ethical action as determined by respectful dialogic exchange and evaluating individual perspective and context (Lindemann, 1997; Speedy, 2009). More latterly, Bond (2015) draws on existentialism and the ethic of care to formulate Relational Ethics, which marks a shift away from the predominance of the ethic of autonomy. This recognises the primary importance of the relationship in counselling, and the bi-directional relational trust between counsellor and client noting ‘*the challenges arising from difference, inequality, risk and uncertainty.*’ (Bond 2015: 244). Bond echoes Erikson (1963) regarding the importance of resolving mis/trust in the therapeutic relationship as a recognition of ‘*what is meaningful in life*’ (Bond, 2015:437). This approach eschews relying on ethical ‘rules’ and proposes the importance of continued ‘ethical mindfulness’ or active reflection on the complexity of contemporary practice (Bond, 2015; Proctor, 2014). This shift away from the predominance of individual autonomy and towards inter-relatedness is significant for this thesis.

Figure 1: Overview of Philosophical Approaches to Ethics.

Ethical Approach	Developed by	Ethical Qualities
Deontological	Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)	Duty and obligation People as ends in themselves.
Utilitarian	David Hume (1711-76) John Stuart Mills (1806-73)	Evaluation of consequences of actions ‘greatest good for the greatest number.
Ethics of care	Carol Gilligan, (1982) Noddings (1984)	Inter-connectedness of people. Relational and empathic ethics.
Virtue Ethics	Aristotle (384-322BC)	Personal qualities (of practitioner), contemplative, mindful ethics.

Narrative or communicative ethics	Speedy (2008) White and Epston (1990)	Postmodern critique of notion of universality of one ethical approach. Ethics as contextual and storied arising from respectful discussion.
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Adapted from Bond (2015) and Proctor (2014)

The BACP Ethical Framework is regarded as the main guidance on ethics in counselling (Daniels and Jenkins, 2010). It has traditionally reflected the diverse origins of counselling ethics and values found in the table above (BACP, 2012). This is signified by the inclusion of values, principles and personal moral qualities sections of this framework. Principles such as autonomy (fostering client independence), trustworthiness, and beneficence (a commitment to promoting client well-being) have historically taken centre stage alongside moral qualities such as empathy, respect and integrity. This prominence denoted the influence of virtue ethics drawn from both Aristotle and Carl Rogers' 'core-conditions' of the therapeutic relationship (1957). Interestingly, the rising influence of relational ethics is apparent in the latest version mainly authored by Bond (ratified in 2016).

The 2016 version of the BACP Ethical Framework shows a greater emphasis on inter-relatedness and a lessening of the pre-dominance of client autonomy. The application of these ideas is revealed through an increased focus on record keeping, working with colleagues and sharing information for safeguarding reasons, alongside protecting client privacy. Some sections denote a greater emphasis on deontological ethics describing the duty and obligations of counsellors. These changes echo a wider public discourse and policy on multi-professional information sharing. Sections on 'Keeping Trust' and 'Respecting Privacy and Confidentiality' have been shortened. Reeves (2015) reflects on the draft framework and highlights its contextual emphasis and the retained focus on ethical resourcefulness and responsiveness to client diversity and need. However, I note that the original section that described the need for 'specific ethical competence' when working with children and young people has been omitted (2012: 6). This former section stated that, information sharing by

counsellors should be determined by the potential benefits for the child, developmental age, and any issues of safety at stake (McGinnis and Jenkins, 2006). In the current framework, the only section on working with children and young people now places the focus on parental consent and stating that counsellors need to:

'...take account of their [young people's] capacity to give informed consent, whether it is appropriate to seek the consent of others who have parental responsibility for the young person, and their best interests' (BACP, 2018:16).

In relation, a specific acknowledgement of young people's growing independence as they mature has been removed from the 2016 version (BACP, 2012). This echoes Alderson's (2017) concern with what she considers as a retreat from Gillick⁵ competence and the role it played in recognising young people's capacity to make decisions, which she ascribes to the failure of the US to ratify the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (West Norfolk Health Authority 1991). She proposes this contributed to a move away from a children's rights respecting culture to one of maintaining adult dominance.

Overall, the changes in the BACP Ethical Framework seem to mark a move towards an interrelated idea of what trust in relationships with counsellors requires. It perhaps marks a shift towards a more 'integrated' as opposed to a 'differentiated' (or independent) form of therapeutic confidentiality that encourages the sharing of young people's information to promote their well-being and safeguard them (Bond, 1991). This raises the complex multi-professional and interdisciplinary debates about children's and young people's dual rights to protection and autonomy.

Debates about Children's Rights to Participation and Protection

There has been much academic discussion concerning competing paradigms of childhood. These reflect an over-arching divide between the best interest/welfare paradigm which emphasises children's vulnerability and need for protection, versus the 'children's rights and agency' position which emphasises their capabilities and formulates children as autonomous social actors (James and Prout, 1998; Carnevale et al., 2015). There are complex multi-

⁵ See page 43 for definition

disciplinary and multi-professional arguments regarding this divide that there is insufficient space to explore in this thesis (see Carnevale, 2015). Young people's legal rights are multi-dimensional, involving differing and contested interpretations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989/1991). These indicate children's rights to well-being (article 3, 6), protection from harm (article 19, 34), privacy (article 16) and participation in decisions that affect them (article, 12). The document's lack of precise definition regarding children's 'best interests' has been critiqued, with some workers commenting on how under the justification of 'protecting', other rights such as the rights to participate can be relegated (James, 2012).

Sociological criticisms of historical constructions of childhood as vulnerable, pure and dependent assert that children are regarded as 'human becomings' rather than 'human beings' (James and Prout, 1998; Qvortrup, 2015). Taking this approach may fail to recognise the capabilities of children to reflect on their situations and express their views. The new sociology of childhood movement reformulated children as active agents with expertise of their lives (McNamee, 2016). Children and young people's capabilities are clearly influenced by contextual factors such as whether communication approaches of adults are sufficiently accessible and child-centred (Thomas and O'Kane, 2000). Alderson (2007) successfully demonstrates children and young people's abilities to contribute to decision-making processes in consent for medical procedures, given appropriate communicative facilitation. Lansdown's (2005) reviews research into children's experiences of safeguarding and suggests that adults consistently underestimate children's capacities. James (2003) critiques the frequency of the use of the phrase, children's 'best interests' and comments on the resulting loss of meaning and mis/use that privileges adult authority and convenience. These arguments whilst recognising that protection is vital, suggest that over-protection risks treating children as passive 'objects of concern' which in turn can fail to recognize their capabilities and leads to disregarding and silencing their voices and opinions (Lansdown, 2005; Alderson and Morrow, 2008). Over-protection can result in a failure to recognise children's expertise on their own lives and a failure to consult children and facilitate their involvement in safeguarding processes (Winter, 2009).

These ideas are of special relevance for this thesis. Some commentators suggest that young people's rights to confidentiality that are supported by Article 16 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) have been eroded by the development of information sharing policies and practices over the last fifteen years (Munro, 2007; Daniels and Jenkins,

2010). Salvo (2005) used a Foucauldian lens to critique information sharing bureaucracy as a regime of power that represented surveillance of social workers and their clients. Imperatives about information sharing are often set against the context of horrific child deaths – often of very young and vulnerable children. Such powerful discourses coupled with professionals' concern to 'get it right' may coalesce and be reinforced by a process of governmentality (or the power of discourses to promote self-editing behaviour) with unintended consequences in terms of safeguarding (Foucault, 1977 in Senellart and Burchell, 2007). These processes may influence professional practice so that young people are treated as 'objects of concern' without capacities, expertise and views, and serve to maintain adult authority (Lansdown, 2005; Munro, 2011). This raises the question of whether the move to a preventive child welfare system that requires the free exchange of information, erodes young people's trust in relationships with professionals who support them.

Ongoing trusting relationships with professionals may well facilitate young people in reframing experiences as risky, abusive or exploitative, which might support further disclosures and reduce harm (Smeaton, 2013; Hickie and Hallett, 2016). Daniels and Jenkins (2010) argue that the widespread loss of meaningful, confidential space for young people may result in them being disempowered and losing trust resulting in disclosures being subsequently withdrawn. Davies and Ward (2012) review safeguarding research, and report that there has been a significant drop in young people self-disclosing abusive or neglectful experiences since 1997. This review questions whether the decline implies the decreasing prevalence of child mistreatment or a lack of confidence by young people in children's services. Winter (2009) and Hickie and Hallett (2016) highlight the tendency for social workers to be overly protective sometimes at the expense of young people's autonomy and trust in ways that may fail to acknowledge their capabilities and may also undermine trust, leaving them feeling coerced. Moves to pro-actively protect young people in responses to the Rotherham (Jay, 2014) and Rochdale (Coffey, 2014) child sexual exploitation reports (CSE) define young people as 'children' to acknowledge the extent of their vulnerability (Lefevre et al., 2017). This may be counterproductive leaving young people feeling disempowered and controlled and subject to constraints on their movement and communication, perhaps leaving them unwilling to engage with support services.

Disciplinary barricades have been erected between sociological perspectives of children as social actors with capabilities, expertise and psychological perspectives that formulate children's vulnerabilities and developmental needs. This is predicated upon an unhelpful

dichotomy in the context of real-world professional practice with children and young people (Shemmings, 2000; Cossar et al., 2014; Lefevre, 2018). I take the position that young people possess capabilities, insight, unique insider knowledge of their lives and are citizens with rights (Kellett, 2010), but that they also have developmental entitlements and vulnerabilities, for example that communication styles are accessible and child-centred. Developmental psychology has been subject to frequent sociological critiques for contributing to notions of children as incomplete and incapable (Such and Walker, 2005). Some critiques have relied on unsophisticated readings of the diversity of developmental frameworks that can equally be regarded as recognising children's and young people's agency as core constructs (Woodhouse and Reese, 2009). For example, ecological systems theory describes how tiers of environmental systems influence development, but also how individual interaction, and agency makes human beings '*active producers of their own development*' (Bronfenbrenner, 2005: xxxvii). Whilst some psychological frameworks such as attachment theory could do more to recognise the cultural and contextual diversity of children's lives, they have done much to improve the safety and welfare of children and young people (Keller, 2004; Lefevre, 2018). Indeed, ideas about child development are deeply embedded in the drafting of the UNCRC and hence, in discussions about young peoples' rights (James and Prout, 1998). Psychological understandings of inclusive and developmentally appropriate communication styles, such as the use of non-verbal and play-based approaches have supported the extension and use of child-centred and inclusive communication in research and practice, thus potentially facilitating children's views into the public domain (Lefevre, 2018). The recognition that children (like adults) can communicate vulnerabilities unconsciously and relationally, for example by being withdrawn or chaotic, is a vital tool in recognising needs, protecting vulnerabilities and accessing their concerns.

Academic paradigms of childhood is contested territory, where each side of the debate seeks to position themselves on the moral high ground. I have argued (Fuller, 2014) for an unpolarised approach to sharing information within SBC, which takes a holistic perspective on the realities of working alongside young people who will have areas of vulnerability, resilience and capacity. Empowering young people's involvement in safeguarding processes can be protective by increasing self-worth and efficacy which in turn can help young people to reframe their experiences as abusive or risky (Limber and Kaufman 2002; Schofield, 2005). Young people need the opportunity to develop relationships of trust with professionals if they are to feel able to disclose their real concerns (Featherstone and Evans, 2004; Jobe and Gorin,

2013; Jay, 2014; Lefevre et al., 2017). This vital trust may be supported by listening to young people's views, acknowledging their capacities and seeking their involvement. Such an approach recognises the complex inter-subjective, dialogic and relational processes that facilitate young people to share their concerns and to engage with support services (Hickle and Hallet, 2016).

Trust and Participation in Safeguarding Processes

The arguments above have led to a concern to promote young peoples' more active participation in statutory safeguarding processes (Munro, 2011; Lefevre, et al., 2013; Cossar et al., 2014). Increasing legislation has sought to recognise the importance of consulting children and young people in safeguarding processes (See Boddy, 2013; Working Together to Safeguard Children, HM.Gov. 2018). Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) for example, details practitioners' responsibility to seek the views of the child, when completing assessments. However, Rustin (2005) and Ferguson (2017) criticise the current climate of managerialism, which includes strict performance indicators, league tables, tight budgets, austerity and high caseloads amongst social workers and other professionals which can result in a loss of focus on the young person. Within social work one recognised influence on young people's participation is the quality of the relationship between young people and professionals (Bell, 2002; Ruch, 2005; Rees et al., 2010). Studies suggest that collaborating with young people following disclosures can increase empowerment, self-worth, self-efficacy and confidence (Limber and Kaufman, 2002; Schofield, 2005). For young people who have experienced abuse, there may be associated feelings of powerlessness and invisibility and workers have a responsibility to not compound these feelings (Munro, 2011; Cossar et al., 2014). A range of social work literature encourages a refocusing on relational approaches between professionals and young people so that they can develop a sense of trust and dependability on the social workers whose role it is to protect and support them (See Ruch, 2014; Ferguson, 2017; Hingley-Jones and Ruch, 2016; Lefevre et al., 2017). Mainey et al. (2009) outlines young people's views of relational qualities that they valued in safeguarding practitioners. These values included empathy, listening, warmth, honesty, informality, interest, commitment, respect, reliability and a willingness to intervene. Cossar et al. (2014) emphasise the bi-directional nature of trust and outlined how young people trusted social workers who they felt were honest, kind, and took time to listen. This study highlights how developing interpersonal trust supported young people to share further concerns.

If trust in relationships with professionals supports the sharing of concerns and the meaningful participation of young people in safeguarding processes supports trust: then this helix suggests young people's participatory involvement in safeguarding processes may be central to the promotion of their well-being and safety (Lefevre, et al., 2017). Equally, advancing young people's participation is fundamentally interconnected with realising their rights as set out in article 12 of the UNCRC (Stephens and King, 2016). This serves to highlight the redundancy of formulating young people's agency and their protection as a polarised binary divide. Yet, despite the growing emphasis on children's participatory approaches in UK policy guidance on safeguarding in schools, such initiatives may not necessarily be translated into the widespread adoption of child centred approaches to safeguarding practice (Holland and Scourfield, 2004). A combination of heavy workloads, an emphasis on austerity in government policy resulting in funding stagnation and cuts, combined with the domination of bureaucratic processes which include public performance indicators, may push communicating with young people low down on professionals' agenda within both social work and education contexts (McLaughlin, 2014, Ferguson, 2017). Equally, participation may be tokenistic or not sufficiently accessible to the communication needs of children and young people (Hart, 2013)

The ideas above discussed mainly in the context of statutory social work, raises the question of whether professionals in this study of non-statutory school counselling seek to empower young people to participate in safeguarding processes? If so, how do they interact and relate with young people to achieve this end?

Conclusion

Trust is central to both ethical counselling relationships, and to safeguarding. Trust in therapeutic alliances is linked to positive counselling outcomes with young people (McLaughlin et al. 2013). Confidentiality is practically and theoretically embedded in such trust as well as being highly valued by young people (Fox and Butler, 2007; Cooper, 2006b; Chan, 2011; Lynass, Pykhtina and Cooper, 2012). However, there seems to be a trajectory towards relational ethics and integrated working with young people in counselling professional practice guidelines (Bond, 1991, 2015). This resonates with interdisciplinary debates about young people's multi-dimensional rights both to protection and agency/autonomy and how these rights are applied to professional practice (Carnevale et al.,

2015). I believe, both sides illuminate important truths about how to support, communicate with, and earn the trust of young people. Whilst participatory methods (in social work) promote trust (Lefevre al., 2013) there is some evidence that safeguarding practice sometimes errs on the side of being over-protective, failing to recognise young people's rights to be involved in safeguarding processes or to act autonomously (Hickle and Hallett, 2016; Smeaton, 2013; Cossar et al., 2014). This may be counterproductive in terms of undermining young peoples' trust relationships with professionals. If trust supports protection and participation supports trust, then school counsellors should have nothing to fear and much to gain, in involving young people in information sharing processes.

Chapter 3: The Affective and Relational Context to School Counsellor Information Sharing

Introduction

This chapter explores school-based counselling (SBC) information sharing and its relational and affective context. After introducing this area, I discuss two broad themes:

1. The influence of multi-professional relationships on SBC provision.
2. The influence of affect⁶ and emotions on how a range of professionals, work with young people during safeguarding processes.

I consider how a counselling emphasis on confidentiality interacts with school cultures and approaches to sharing information. I explore how these different professional cultures are managed in multi-professional relationships between school staff and SBCs. Working with endangered young people can evoke anxiety and other strong feelings (Sprince, 2000; Rustin, 2005). To explore this, I use a psychodynamic framework to analyse how powerful feelings may distort decision-making and impact relationships with young people. I contrast this with ideas from narrative ethics about the positive use of affect and individual narratives on professional practice (Speedy, 2009; Nussbaum, 2001). I begin by looking at the background to information sharing in SBC.

School-based Counselling and Safeguarding

A raft of legislation, policy guidance and research suggests that schools are uniquely placed to identify child need and risk of harm (Munro, 2011; Lefevre, et al., 2013). Prominent here are the 1989 Children's Act (section 17 and 47); 'Every Child Matters Green Paper' (2003a); 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2018); and Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2016). Corporately these policies assert schools' role in safeguarding children because of

⁶ I will use 'affect' to denote the broad domain of feelings and emotions, as opposed to thinking or behaviour. I will use 'feelings' to denote the private perceptual understandings and the meanings taken from actions that are experienced internally by individuals (Damasio, 2012). These are related to, but contrasted with, emotions which are conceptualised as the observable physiological responses – both bodily and chemical that are triggered by the emotion centres of the brain (Holliday, 2014). Feelings are thus the individual perception of what happens when we experience an emotion.

their ongoing daily contact with children. School counselling can play a safeguarding role, giving students the opportunity to 'disclose' or reveal previously hidden abusive or distressing experiences to a trusted adult (Adamson, 2006; Baginsky, 2008; McGinnis, 2008). School counsellors may be able to work in a more individual way than school staff may have time to do. Commentators point to the ease with which the vulnerabilities of secondary aged students can either be ignored or not taken as seriously as concerns for younger children (Stein et al., 2009; Hicks and Stein, 2010; Rees et al., 2011). School staff may struggle to know how to make sense of ambiguous behaviour or find it hard to determine the level of risk that would require a referral to Children's Services (Lefevre et al., 2013). A counsellor potentially provides individual listening attention for a young person which may make difficulties easier to recognise and communicate. School counsellors' orientations may influence the character of their professional relationships with students. Paulson and Everall (2002) suggest that young people find it easier to communicate with professionals who seek to develop an equitable relationship with them. Humanistic approaches predominate within school counselling (McArthur, 2016). These approaches emphasise the importance of mutual relationships and seek to foster young client's autonomy. Counsellors can also contribute to safeguarding students by being trained in child-centred communication approaches, including visual methods, stories or using games and activities alongside talking (Jenkins and Polat, 2006; Baginsky, 2008).

McGinnis (2008) highlights how school counselling provides an opportunity to disclose areas of risk or abuse. However, she suggests there may be a dichotomy between the perceived confidentiality of counselling that helps young people to feel safe to disclose abusive experiences and ambivalence about what they might want to happen arising from it. Similar processes are discussed in social work research whereby young people may consciously desire for information to be kept private whilst unconsciously seeking intervention to stop the abuse (McElvaney, 2014; Anderson, 2016). Young people often fear not being believed or losing control of the consequences for their family and/or feel to blame for their experiences (Featherstone, 2004; Cossar et al., 2016; Linell, 2017). Disclosures may also be partial and implied. These ideas highlight the complex processes associated with disclosure and failure to disclose, abuse. This illuminates that decisions by SBC about sharing information may be made in the context of strong emotions and potential ambiguity about the intentions of young clients (Jenkins and Polat, 2006; Jenkins and Palmer, 2012).

Confidentiality and Limited Confidentiality

Young people's rights to confidentiality in the UK are enshrined by the Gillick Principle in case-law that proposes that young people have the right to access services and make decisions for themselves providing they can demonstrate sufficient understanding of the issues in hand (Gillick v West Norfolk Area Health Authority, 1991). The English Children's Legal Centre concluded that this judgement gives young people under 16 the right to confidential counselling (Children's Legal Centre, 1989)⁷. The 'Fraser guidelines' elucidates professional practice applications and suggests that under 16s have the right to seek confidential advice where they have refused their parents being informed and counselling is in the young person's best interest (Daniels and Jenkins, 2010). However, Alderson (2017) writing in the field of medical consent has determined a retreat from the application of the Gillick Principle over the last twenty years.

Professional guidance within counselling emphasises the vulnerability of young people and the need for confidentiality to be conditional so that information can be shared with other relevant professionals where young clients are believed to be at risk of harm (McGinnis and Jenkins, 2006; Hill et al., 2011; DfE, 2016; BACP, 2018). Service level agreements between SBC agencies and schools enshrine this approach, with SBC services undertaking to follow local authority statutory guidance on the sharing of information to safeguard young people (Pattison, 2009; Jenkins, 2010; DfE, 2016). School counsellors balance competing demands of providing a confidential service whilst working within employment contracts that require them to follow child protection protocols (Jenkins, 2010; Fuller, 2014). This is often achieved by outlining the limits of confidentiality in initial sessions with young people as suggested by professional practice guidelines (McGinnis and Jenkins, 2006; Pattison et al., 2009; Hill et al., 2011; DfE, 2016). Young people may be told what they share is confidential unless they, or another young person is believed to be in significant danger (Holliday and Fuller et al., 2014). Limited confidentiality contracts support counsellors to balance the demands of ethical practice frameworks, which require them to maintain trust, promote safety and respect confidentiality (Pattison et al., 2009; DfE, 2016; BACP, 2018). These allow young people to

⁷ See Jenkins and Palmer (2012) and Jenkins (2010) for a detailed exploration of the legal positions in other nations of the UK.

access to some confidential space whilst recognising their potential vulnerability, which may require interventions to protect them from harm (Pattison et al. 2009; Hill et al. 2011; DfE, 2016). Daniels and Jenkins (2010) criticise limited confidentiality because they believe ultimately it may cause young people to lose trust and withdraw disclosures where the information is shared without consent.

Research into Information Sharing by School Counsellors

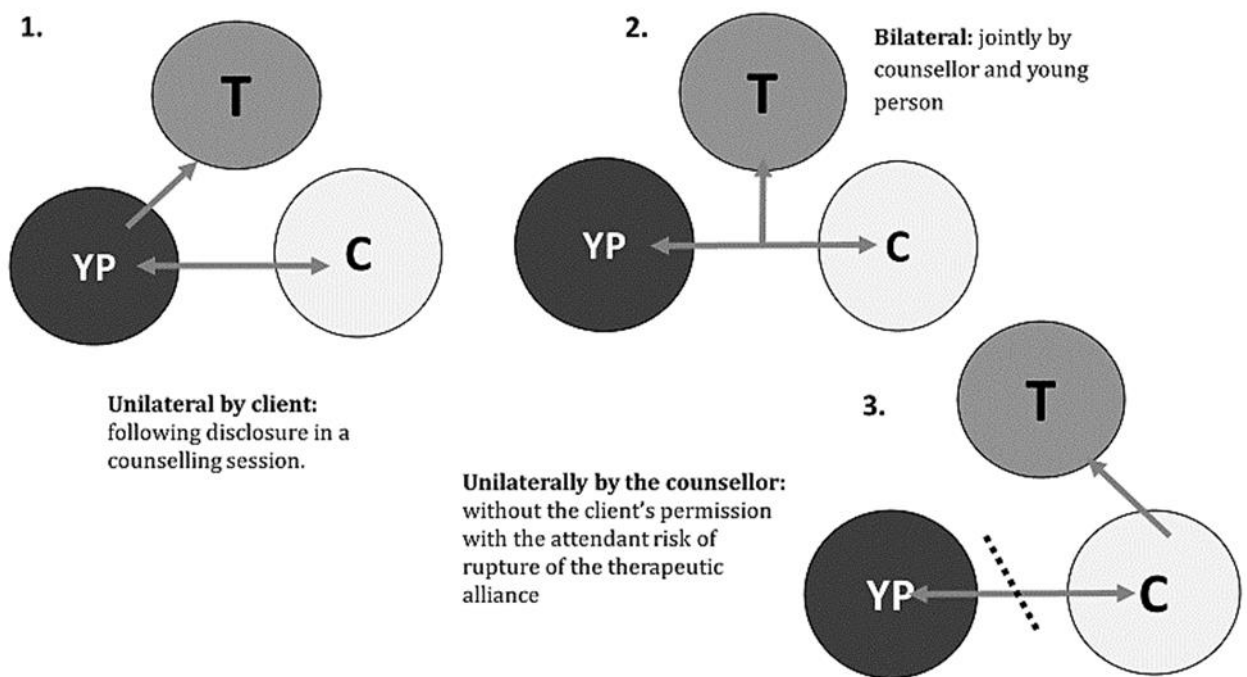
There is currently little research on the processes of SBC information sharing, and how counsellors work with young people during these processes (Brown, 2006; Jenkins and Palmer, 2012). This paucity was revealed through a search of the literature using the phrase '*school counselling*' combined with the terms '*safeguarding*', '*information sharing*', '*child protection*' and '*ethical dilemmas*' within data bases such as Scopus, PsycINFO, Sussex University library and Google Scholar. I also searched extensively within specific professional journals including BACP Counselling and Psychotherapy Research (CPR), British Journal of Counselling and Guidance and Pastoral Care in Education and within EThOS for PhD theses.

Daniels and Jenkins (2010) suggest frequent ethical dilemmas arise in working therapeutically with young people that are very stressful for counsellors. They attribute this to tensions between ethical principles such as autonomy, fidelity (trust) and beneficence (promoting clients' well-being). Sprong and Harries (2017) describe how SBCs used supervision to help them evaluate the risks that young clients face. This study suggests that safeguarding issues are the principal concern when working in school environments and supervisors are expected to have up to date information about child protection policies and legislation. I have previously argued for the use of transparent communication processes and informed consent for information sharing wherever possible (Fuller, 2014). Armstrong's (2014) qualitative study highlights the use of 'counselling link teacher' to manage the flow communication between the school staff and SBCs. This study also comments on the use of informed consent from young people as a mechanism or 'bridge' that protects the trust in therapeutic alliances. The extract below is from a counselling link teacher:

If they have the power really and the control of informed consent that doesn't break any trust they are building with the counsellor... (Armstrong, 2014: 199).

This study does not, however, include the views of young people. Equally, Jenkins and Palmer's (2012) study of interviews and surveys involving thirteen school counsellors implies a complex process of balancing confidentiality with maintaining the therapeutic alliance and applying risk management policies. This study helpfully describes different forms of disclosures to third parties either by young people, with their involvement and consent or unilaterally by the counsellor (see Figure, 2). It asserts the psychological value of containment of client material within the counsellor-student relationship and the '*possible disruption of that therapeutic alliance, where the counsellor's disclosure is done without client consent*' (Jenkins and Palmer, 2012: 555).

Figure 2: Forms of Disclosure: Jenkins and Palmer (2012)



This study's transcendental realist stance argues that social processes "*exist objectively in the world and exert strong influences over human activities because people construe them in common ways*" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 4, in Jenkins and Palmer, 2012). Jenkins and Palmer acknowledge this ontology did not allow the exploration of subjective relational and affective processes that may influence information sharing. This is significant because they highlighted counsellor stress when managing risk without the methodological tools to explore this aspect. This study also did not include the views of young people and other stakeholders. I

have designed this thesis in response to these limitations. Consequently, I have given precedence to young people's views and to the affective and relational contexts of SBC information sharing.

I now turn to the impact of multi-professional relationships on SBC information sharing.

Communication, Confidentiality and Professional Relationships

McGinnis (2008:126) suggests that offering young people confidentiality is contentious, provokes 'strong feelings' and requires reflection. Ideas about information sharing and confidentiality raise complex issues for multi-professional working for school counsellors. Education staff share information about young people for many different purposes, with safeguarding being just one reason (Music, 2008; Luxmoore, 2016). Communication not associated with safeguarding may seem to lie outside the precise remit of this thesis, yet it provides the crucial backdrop for SBC work. Differences in the professional cultures of education and counselling influence how these two groups of professionals work with each other, and young people. Educational professionals' attitudes towards students is often based on a 'welfare' approach which promotes the routine sharing of information to support young people's educational progress and well-being (Music, 2008; Daniels and Jenkins, 2010; Fuller, 2014; Luxmore, 2016). School counsellors need to understand this open approach to collegial communication which is deeply rooted in education culture.

In Chapter 2, I detailed how the concept of client confidentiality is central to professional counselling practice, from an ethical and theoretical perspective (Hill et al., 2011; BACP, 2018; DfE, 2016). I described how confidentiality is essential to allow young people to share difficult experiences and is linked to trust in alliances, which is necessary for positive outcomes.

Professional guidance and evaluation research suggests that it is necessary for counsellors to both maintain the confidentiality of sessions whilst effectively communicating with other professionals (Pattison et al., 2009; Hill et al., 2011; Armstrong, 2014). Young people referred to counselling services often provoke anxiety, anger or frustration in teachers. Counsellors can potentially offer containment for these experiences and insight into the meanings of challenging or anxiety-provoking behaviour (Music 2008, Heyno, 2009). Studies suggest that mediating the strongly contrasting cultural and professional practices between counselling and education presents significant challenges for further developing SBC services (Fox and Butler, 2007; Hamilton-Roberts, 2012; Pybis et al., 2012). Some studies identify friction over

the confidential treatment of young people's information in schools as a central obstacle to developing further provision (Jenkins and Polat, 2006; Hamilton-Roberts, 2012). In contrast, Pybis et al. (2012) reveal general agreement between different stakeholders over issues of confidentiality.

Outside of the requirements of safeguarding, the general approach to confidentiality within counselling may sometimes be misunderstood or treated with suspicion by school staff who may desire information to support their students (Jenkins and Polat, 2006; Hill et al., 2011; Hamilton-Roberts, 2012; Armstrong, 2014). Teachers in several studies wanted more feedback about counselling sessions and the progress of students (Jenkins and Polat, 2006; Cooper, 2009). The confidentiality of SBC is described as a '*double-bladed sword*' that both promotes the attractiveness of counselling services for young people and facilitates its effectiveness yet creates tensions in professional relationships between counsellors and school staff (Hamilton-Roberts, 2012: 481; Chan and Quinn, 2012). Hill, et al. (2011) suggests teachers want to have more direct liaison with school counsellors. This study recommended education staff have opportunities to develop their understanding of how counsellors work and the purposes of confidentiality. Researching information sharing practices within SBC may be helpful in illuminating counsellor practice when confidentiality becomes limited. This may help demystify this area and help overcome some of the multi-professional obstacles to further provision (Fox and Butler, 2007; Hamilton-Roberts, 2012).

The Affective and Relational Context to School Counsellor Information Sharing

Several studies highlight the importance of counsellors developing positive working relationships with school staff, as these relationships have a direct impact on the quality of the counselling service (Cromarty and Richards, 2009; Harris, 2009; Armstrong, 2014). Multi-professional relationships will also influence how a counsellor experiences working in school contexts. Harris' (2009) small-scale study highlights the powerful emotions involved for counsellors who are often the sole mental health professionals in schools, often on part-time and temporary working contracts. This study reveals some school counsellors feel like 'outsiders' without a 'secure base' and feel they do not matter to school hierarchies (Bowlby, 1969). These counsellors describe feeling objectified as 'its', trying to support vulnerable children within top down systems; this sometimes caused them to leave posts to protect their

well-being (Buber, 1971). Moor's (2014) autobiographic work describes her leaving her SBC post because she felt professionally isolated and disregarded. The body of literature described above, suggests that counsellors need to feel integrated within schools and develop positive multi-professional relationships with education staff to ensure the effective delivery and development of SBC provision.

I have outlined how SBC happens in the context of different discourses between counselling and education concerning information sharing and confidentiality that may cause tensions for multi-professional working. Yet, collegial respect and communication may be vital if young people are to be effectively safeguarded. Further, one could argue that how counsellors and school staff work together in safeguarding situations may be critical in how SBC is viewed more generally in individual schools. These high-pressure situations may influence ongoing multi-professional relationships between school staff and school counsellors (Jenkins and Palmer, 2012).

This opening section has been concerned with what research elucidates about professional relationships between school counsellors and school staff. This forms the relational and systemic backdrop to information sharing by SBC. I now turn to the second factor that impacts SBC information sharing, the affect and emotions of professionals who work alongside vulnerable young people. This is explored across a range of professions, but there will be a particular focus on social workers who are in the front line of making safeguarding decisions.

Affect and Safeguarding Processes

Working with young people during safeguarding processes is an anxiety provoking endeavour (Cooper and Lousada, 2005; Rustin, 2005). Significantly, how these feelings are viewed is contested territory. Responses vary, for example:

1. Feelings may be disregarded or critiqued as unhelpful subjective influences, which need to be tempered by technical and managerial approaches.
2. Psychodynamic theory may be used to analyse how powerful feelings and emotions can impair decision-making and thinking;
3. Narrative, feminist and phenomenological scholars may formulate feeling responses as constitutive of healthy decision-making (Nussbaum, 2001).

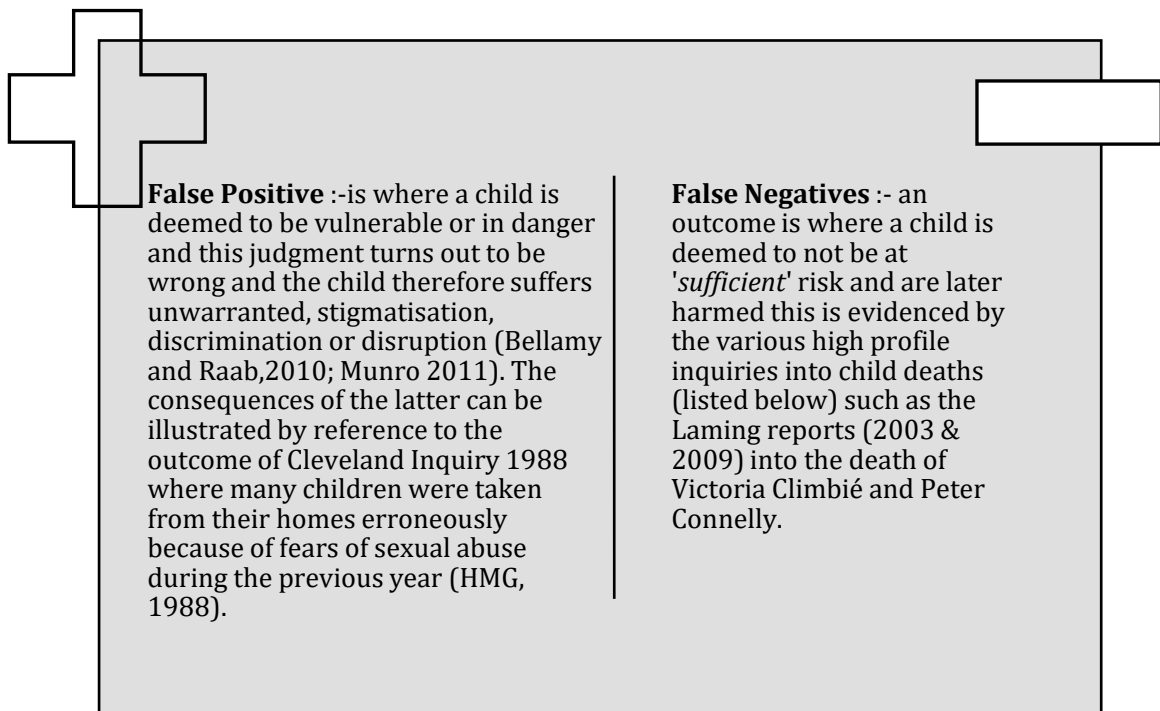
My position is that to determine whether feelings associated with safeguarding are a good or bad thing, it is important to consider how/if professionals engage with and reflect upon them. The following section therefore considers the wider context of the public management of information sharing and its influence on safeguarding practice with young people (Parton, 2006). Following this, I outline how psychodynamic theories such as countertransference, projective identification and containment can be used to think about the powerful feelings that vulnerable young people evoke in practitioners.

Bureaucracy and Managerialism in Information Sharing

Information sharing is historically conflicted territory where public opinion and government policy has been subject to large scale swings, fluctuation and change (Bellamy and Raab, 2010). Parton (2006) suggests that systematic swings in the emphasis of national policy on information sharing are influenced by whatever type of ‘getting it wrong’ has most recently been at the forefront of public attention and this exerts resulting pressure on practitioners. This can lead to what Munro described as ‘A concern with doing things *‘right’* versus a concern for doing the *‘right thing’* for children and young people (2011:14). Public policy research by Bellamy and Raab (2010) suggests that frontline workers fear being blamed for ‘getting it wrong’. They posited that both sharing and not sharing information can have negative consequences for service users. They formulate a helpful two-part model of different types of ‘getting it wrong’, outlined in Figure 3 below.

Much contemporary public policy reflects a ‘New Public Management’ approach that has its origins in business culture and privileges cognitive, rational and technical decision-making in professional practice (Parton, 2006; Ruch 2005). This approach emphasises protocol and uses bureaucratic tools and performance indicators to determine the effectiveness of professional practices such as social work (Munro, 2011; Whittaker, 2011). The importance of standardising bureaucratic processes has also been emphasised by large scale serious case reviews (see Laming, 2003).

Figure 3: Types of Risk in information Sharing (Bellamy and Raab, 2010)



The procedural approach may have an important role to play in the management of safeguarding practice (HM.Gov. 2018). However, an unintended consequence of managerialism may be a loss of focus on young people and on professionals developing relationships of trust with them, (Rustin, 2005; Munro, 2011; Ferguson, 2017). This may happen, despite policy initiatives that encourage their active participation in safeguarding processes. Parton (2014) describes how this approach detracts from listening to, and directly communicating with, young people. A range of serious case reviews, large scale child protection reports, and statutory guidance emphasise the need for active engagement with children and young people so that their voices, views and concerns are made central in safeguarding processes (see Laming, 2003, 2009; The Common Assessment Framework CWDC, 2008; 2008 Children and Young Persons Act; Munro, 2011; Lefevre, et al., 2013; Cossar et al., 2014; and Working Together to Safeguard Children, HM.Gov., 2018). Such engagement is necessary if young people are going to be more effectively supported and protected. These reports comment on the potential invisibility of vulnerable children and young people and a tendency for their voices to be eclipsed by adults' opinions. This factor is evident despite policy initiatives such as 'Working together to Safeguard Children' (HMG, 2018) which assert

that all child protection assessments should be 'child centred' and include the views and perspectives of young people.

A further danger of the public managerialism approach has been identified by workers who have used a psychodynamic framework to critique how high caseloads, limited resources and the continued emphasis on completing bureaucratic assessment processes may leave little space for active reflection on decision-making (Ruch, 2005, 2012; Turney and Ruch, 2016). These pressures may leave subjective feelings unacknowledged and unexplored within over-stretched safeguarding systems. The powerful feelings that vulnerable and endangered children provoke, may sometimes leave child protection systems paralysed and powerless (Laming, 2003; Rustin, 2005; Ferguson, 2017).

Safeguarding, Feeling and Thinking: Ideas from Psychodynamic Theory

The application of psychodynamic theory is common to both counselling and social work practice and can provide a supportive framework for thinking about the origins and impact of powerful feelings on professional practice. Rustin (2005) retrospectively explored the context of social work and other professional interventions prior to the death of Victoria Climbié. Rustin used a psychodynamic lens to analyse the avoidance of mental pain and fragmentation of thinking or 'attacks on linking' that contributed to Victoria not being protected (Bion, 2013; Rustin, 2005). Later, Ferguson, (2017) described how children can become invisible through a combination of a lack of direct engagement with them, a focus on form-filling and fragmentation in communication between groups of professionals. Ferguson's study suggests that demanding social work caseloads and insufficient reflective supervision and institutional containment, leaves little room to engage directly with children. This results in children being not sufficiently thought about and being left in danger (Ferguson, 2017). Other studies highlight the danger of children playing a minor part in the assessments that are designed to protect them (Rees et al., 2010; Davies and Ward, 2012). Both Rustin's and Ferguson's studies used ideas about defences, or the detaching from sources of anxiety, and the role of professional containment in regulating anxiety and promoting clear thinking (Bion, 1970). The former suggests that humans defend against, or seek to avoid, anxious or uncomfortable feelings (Freud, 1937). These studies contend that professional reflective supervision is required to process and contain powerful feelings, provoked by working with vulnerable young people and restore clear thinking (Turney and Ruch, 2016). I now apply

psychodynamic counselling theory to explore how powerful feelings may impact upon the practice of professionals who work with young people.

Counsellors Countertransference, Containment and Mentalization

The term countertransference describes powerful feelings that can be experienced when working alongside vulnerable clients in therapy (Clarkson, 2004). Such feelings require reflection and sometimes supervision to understand their meaning and value to the therapeutic endeavour (Rowan and Jacobs, 2002). Transference and countertransference processes originally described by Freud are recognised by most schools of counselling although they are formulated very differently with different labels and names (See Holliday, 2014:111). For example, Person Centred practitioners will describe the feelings that they believe resonates with their clients as 'deep empathy' and attachment theorists will use the phrase 'internal working model' to describe the transference in terms of relational projections onto therapists and others (Rowan and Jacobs, 2002). The psychodynamic term countertransference refers to two interrelated phenomena:

1. The feelings experienced by counsellor that are evoked by the client, but their origins lay in the past or present emotional conflicts of the counsellor (Gelso and Hayes, 2007). This is termed **proactive countertransference** and is largely considered an unhelpful phenomenon, as such feelings may distort the therapeutic encounter (Clarkson, 2004).
2. Feelings originating in clients which can be projected into and experienced by the counsellor. This is described as **reactive countertransference** (Clarkson, 2004). This form of projection is regarded as potentially helpful by later psychodynamic workers, as it communicates the client's experiences to the counsellor via an unconscious process.

Fordham (1979) cautions against neat delineations of these concepts and emphasises how these different experiences are dynamically interrelated. He describes this aspect as the 'interactional dialectic' whereas Stolorow and Atwood (1992) use the term 'intersubjectivity' and both phrases suggest something of the difficulty of describing with certainty the origins of the feelings experienced i.e. whether they originate in the counsellor or client. Equally, projective identification, which is a concept formulated by object relations theorists, is used to

describe the projection of powerful negative and unprocessed feelings on to a therapist by a client (Klein, 1946/1988). This process allows the client to unconsciously dispel or externalise hated parts of themselves by projecting them on to/into another person and hence disown them. There is insufficient space within this thesis to explore the complex geneses and development of these ideas (for a detailed exploration of these ideas see Gelso and Hayes, 2007). Bion took forward these ideas to describe how powerful unprocessed feelings are communicated to, or projected into the therapist, who is then able to think about, contain and moderate feelings that might otherwise threaten to overwhelm an individual (Bion, 1970; Douglas, 2007). These ideas were originally described in relation to the role of primary carers in moderating an infant's sensation, feelings and emotions.

Bion highlights the role of maternal 'reverie' in digesting and making sense of chaotic and unbearable sensations of the infant which are then reflected back, in a moderated form. Bion argues that this experience of the mirroring and metabolising of chaotic feelings helps an individual to be able to think about their feelings rather than being overwhelmed by them (Garland, 2002; Holliday, 2014). Without the containment that attuned care-giving brings, it is difficult for example, for an infant to make sense of her experiences and sensations. A sense of integration will arise through the continual re-experiencing of this reflective exchange without which, thinking can be impaired and the self itself can feel fragmented (Bion, 2013; Garland, 2002). This reflective function is linked to the development of the capacity to think about feelings. More recently, this aspect has been reformulated by Fonagy et al. (2004) and termed mentalization. This describes a person's ability to imagine the mental states of another person. This capacity to mentalize is fundamentally implicated in affect-regulation processes with some research suggesting that the parents' ability to determine the states of mind of their infants is predictive of the development of secure attachments (Fonagy et al., 2004; Bateman and Fonagy, 2004; Fonagy, 2018). Mentalization is linked to more longstanding psychodynamic ideas about containment and reverie through developments in psychotherapeutic applications of the neuroscience of affect regulation (Schorer, 2008; Holliday, 2014). These developments have refocused therapeutic attention on working with the internal mental processes of clients and the clinical applications of these ideas have received much attention in therapeutic publications and in the development of treatment approaches.

This body of work originating in psychodynamic theory is used to consider how thinking can become impaired by powerful feelings. Gelso and Hayes (2007) suggest a double helix of

hindrance and potential helpfulness is brought into play by strong countertransference reactions to clients where adequate reflection, understanding, empathy, insight and containment is required to turn potentially overwhelming feelings into helpful communication that can promote progress in therapy.

The ideas above illuminate how vulnerable young people provoke powerful countertransference reactions and projections in professionals. These feelings can then get replicated in the systems and institutions that work with young people (Sprince, 2000). This in turn can result in chaotic or neglectful safeguarding practice, as described by Rustin (2005) and Ferguson (2017). Bion's (1970) ideas about the function and value of containment provide a key theoretical justification for the importance of clinical counselling supervision to contain the affective experiences of counsellors and other frontline workers who work alongside vulnerable young people. Career long regular supervision is a requirement of membership of professional counselling bodies such as the BACP and UKCP. Such supervision is regarded as necessary to understand the meaning of countertransference feelings and how these can best be understood to support therapy (Carroll, 2009; Hawkins and Shohet, 2012; Peacock, 2014). Pertinently, recent research by Harries and Sprong (2017) suggests that the supervision of secondary SBC is often dominated by discussions about safeguarding. Although further research is required, this suggests that feelings evoked by safeguarding may be pre-occupying secondary school counsellors.

Ideas about countertransference and containment have equally been applied to the impact on social workers of working with vulnerable young people (Rustin, 2005; Rustin, 2012). Commentators within academic social work highlight the importance of reflective supervision for front line practitioners. A body of work encourages refocusing away from bureaucracy and towards relational approaches between professionals and young people, which encompass the need for reflective supervision for social workers (Cooper, 2005; Ruch, 2012; Hingley-Jones and Ruch, 2016). These approaches allow the communication contained in countertransference to be recognised and reflected upon so that decision-making is not skewed. This area of research considers the role of affective responses in the practice of social workers (Rustin, 2005; Ferguson, 2017). For example Turney and Ruch, (2016) used Cognitive Interviewing techniques during the supervision of child protection social workers to explore the impact of anxiety on professional decision-making processes.

Above, I have used psychodynamic ideas about countertransference, projective identification and containment, to explore how the powerful feelings evoked by vulnerable young people requires reflective supervision to maintain clear thinking and effective decision-making in both safeguarding and counselling practices. In contrast, I now turn to narrative and phenomenological ideas about the helpful role of affect in professional decision-making.

The Role of Affect and Narrative in Professional Decision-making

Ideas from narrative ethics and phenomenology assert the positive value of feelings in making moral and ethical decisions in real life practice across a range of professional settings. These ideas illuminate the role of client stories in ethical decision-making. Narrative ethics emphasise the uniqueness of each moral situation through a focus on the concrete particulars of individual cases, relational virtues and individual character (Lindemann and Nelson, 1997; Speedy, 2009). These ideas claim that feelings do moral work and are a crucial driver in ethical action. Nussbaum (2001) considers how emotional responses represent judgements of the value people place on the situations and the degree of risk they represent. Thus, the more we feel the more things matter or the riskier the situation. In considering the actions of SBC during safeguarding processes this could suggest an inter-subjective process where counsellors allow themselves to be influenced by their responses to clients and their unique stories and contexts, and hence formulate the best way forward (Stern, 1985; Hughes, 2009). This requires an evaluation of what is unique about a person's situation. This encompasses the idea that right action for one person may not be the right action for another. The value of such ethical relativism is often discussed in terms of 'ethical mindfulness' in relation to counselling practice (see Proctor, 2014, and Bond, 2015). SBCs spend their days listening to such narrated stories. They may also be influenced by their own biographies and professional narratives that form part of their professional identity (Clandinin and Connelly, 2004). Macintyre suggests that I can only answer the question "what am I to do?" if I can answer the prior question "*Of what stories do I find myself a part?*" (Macintyre, 1985:221). All such stories are dialogical, they are co-constructed between the listener and the narrator and are bound by the social systems in which they reside (Willis, 2012). Stories evoke feelings and emotions between the narrator and audience that are a central part of the communication. The stories of young clients are likely to influence how counsellors work with young people and share their information.

Recent scholars in the fields of sociology, education and others involved in professional practice have re-engaged with the value of phronesis as a form knowledge that has been neglected within contemporary society. Phronesis is seen as an antidote to the domination of technical rationality and instrumentalism within current social practices such as the 'New Public Managerialism' described above (See, Dunne, 1993; Flyvbjerg, 2001; Frank, 2013; Kinsella and Pitman, 2012). Such phronesis, or practical wisdom is a form of deliberation that makes use of the whole of the embodied and affective human experience and is centred in the interactions between people, recognising that these play a crucial part in determining ethical action in contingent situations.

Polkinghorne (2004: 117) suggests that

'Phronetic deliberation requires that agents approach each new situation prepared to see what is different and unique about it.'

Scholars such as Schön (1983) and Dewey (1929) from the field of education, highlight the reality of the messiness of professional practice settings, which are often dominated by value conflicts and ethical dilemmas. Ideas from Dreyfus (1986) about the experiential and embodied development of professional expertise, suggest that experienced practitioners become researchers of practice who can traverse complexity by making use of past experiences, to construct a new theory of the unique case of the person with whom they are working with and their environment (Kinsella and Pitman, 2012; Polkinghorne, 2004). I now explore how phronesis interconnects with ideas about embodied and affective decision-making.

Embodied Decision-making and Phronesis

Across philosophy, education, social science, psychotherapy and neuroscience a body of thinkers posit that this form of thinking and practical judgement is often embodied. These include Epstein (1980), Dreyfus (1986) and Merleau-Ponty (1962). Gendlin's (1962) description of experiencing emphasises the non-conscious awareness that people have of their background context, of others, themselves and the world. Such experiencing continually integrates new exchanges between the person and the world. Damasio (2000) mapped the interaction between the body, the world and the brain, and illuminated the images that are the building blocks of thinking. These images are created by experiences

stored with body sensations and emotions attached. These somatic markers are categorised, and people use these categories to decide how to act in a process that privileges stimuli that originate within the body. Damasio's neurological research suggests that body sensations and affective responses are key constituents of thinking and decision-making (2012). He argues that much of this embodied thinking happens out of awareness and is processed at great speed and can get labelled as 'intuition'. If we think with our bodies, our feelings as well as our brains, this implies that that much judgment is situational, embodied and emotional and often happens out of immediate awareness. Damasio's ideas may contribute to discussions about the value of intuitive action, which has been recognised widely by theorists within psychotherapy as diverse as Jung (in Feltham and Dryden, 1994) and Rogers (1957). This suggests that practice judgments may involve a complex variety of interconnected responses, including thinking, feeling, relating, knowledge of context and factors that may seem on the surface, spontaneous.

Conclusion

I have explored the literature to establish the professional and affective context to SBC information sharing. This process has highlighted a professional culture clash between counselling and education in approaches to information sharing and confidentiality, that forms the backdrop to multi-professional working by SBCs (Fox and Butler, 2007; Harris, 2009; Daniels and Jenkins, 2010; Hamilton-Roberts, 2012). Mis/trust in these multi-professional relationships is likely to influence how counsellors work with young people during safeguarding processes.

Psychodynamic ideas about defenses, countertransference and containment usefully illuminate how professionals' cognition may be hijacked by the powerful feelings that surround safeguarding vulnerable young people. This illuminates the role of reflective supervision in providing containment for counsellors (and social workers) to maintain effective decision-making, reduce anxiety and maintain focus on the young person (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012; Turney and Ruch, 2016). In contrast, narrative and phenomenological ideas assert the positive role of professional affect in ethical judgements in response to individual clients' situations and stories (Nussbaum, 2001; Speedy, 2009). I have applied ideas about phronesis to highlight research which elucidates the embodied affective and often the implicit nature of this decision-making (Gendlin, 1962; Dunne, 1993; Damasio, 2012). In developing this project, I sought to strike a balance between these contrasting views. These frameworks

agree that feelings matter in safeguarding processes and are likely to influence the decisions professionals make and their practice with young people.

Ideas about phronesis are expanded upon in the following chapter where I discuss the epistemological basis of this thesis.

Chapter 4: A Methodology for Researching Practical Wisdom

Introduction

This methodology chapter sets out the background of phronesis and its epistemological relevance for exploring school counsellor information sharing. The research design of this case study and processes employed are described in the following chapter.

I start by reflecting on the journey that led me to phronesis. The first section sets out my ontological position and its relationship with my relational theoretical framework and professional stance. This represents the ground in which my project has been cultivated. I also describe my 'phronetic bricolage' approach (Trnavcevic and Biloslavo, 2017) which has drawn from other qualitative methodologies as my research design has evolved. I establish how this eclecticism has supported the analysis of the complex dialogic reality of professional practice in information sharing. I introduce phronesis as a form of contextual knowledge, originally described by Aristotle, and often translated as *practical wisdom* (Flyvbjerg, 2001). To understand this approach requires some deconstruction of the origins of the language and concepts on which this methodology is based. Hence, I also outline the ontological roots of phronesis. I discuss Flyvbjerg's (2001, 2012) re-imaging of phronesis as an approach within social science, most often enacted through case study that seeks to illuminate contextual decision-making. This leads to a consideration of how the phronetic focus on determining 'what is good to do' and *praxis* (practice) makes it pertinent to the development of ethical professional practice in areas such as counselling (Frank, 2006). This is followed by consideration of phronesis as *bottom up* research that seeks to mine the practical wisdom of participants to transform areas of social concern (Schram, Sanford, Flyvbjerg, and Landman, 2014). I review the development of my research questions and then conclude by critically evaluating the phronetic approach. I start by reflecting on my research journey to phronesis.

Phronetic Bricolage⁸: A Personal Reflection on a Journey of Methodological Integration

My relational therapeutic practice framework embeds a range of theoretical stances, so I naturally bring to this research the professional 'habit' of integrating differing and sometimes, dichotomous concepts. These include eco-systemic, psychodynamic, Person Centred, humanistic and narrative ideas, as outlined in Chapter 1. My professional careers as a counsellor, counselling tutor, school and higher education teacher have caused me to be surrounded by a range of professional practice concerns and diverse multi-disciplinary understandings. This professional journey has often required me to 'surf' the ontological tensions between the **social** and the **individual** with their attendant discourses and paradigms. Through this, I have found Frosh's (2003) description of human 'subjects' as both constructed and constructing as the most useful formulation. This approach allows for human actors to be subjected to outside constraints, forces and powers yet retain some meaning-making and agency.

I believe, using a range of theoretical lenses offers the potential for greater rigor in any exploration (Kellner, 1995; Lincoln and Denzin, 2000). By employing a flexible and diverse methodological toolbox, one is better equipped to illuminate the rich complexity of human action (Todres, 2007). I acknowledge that sometimes the language needed to describe the variety of theoretical stances which have influenced my thinking can '*strain, crack and sometimes break under the burden*'⁹ of encompassing the range of ideas I have employed (Eliot, 1971)¹⁰. In my research journal, I reflect on the complexity of this multi-dimensional cognitive task.

Like a patchwork quilt that represents a map of the ideas, the connections, the disjunctions between ideas. Some of the thinking will be old well-worn cut up from dresses that I have grown out of. Some will be formed of newer designer thinking and then the job is to work out how can this brand-new material fit alongside the old patch and how can I possibly sew it together to make one quilt. This process of finding, cutting, throwing out some of the patches, arranging and sticking is repeated over and over again and is sometimes painful when old well-loved segments are thrown out.... But there comes a time when I can become an 'audience' and look back at the emerging pattern but see that it is now something new - a new quilt and different methodological creation.

The value of bricolage in research is well established within qualitative inquiry (see Lincoln and Denzin, 2000; Kincheloe, 2001; Denzin, 2012). My approach to this thesis employs this tradition of eclecticism which allows for a plurality of theoretical lenses and approaches to be applied to a set of data within an emergent design (Rogers, 2012). The result of this interdisciplinary approach is to craft a project that uses multiple dialectical perspectives to explore a research problem. This illuminates the complexity of multi-dimensional social and relational realities of professional practice from differing perspectives. The approach, rather than being vague and 'muddy' or alternatively over-involved and academically dizzying, simply makes use of differing qualitative tools and theoretical lenses to be applied to different layers of the research design (Kitcheloe, 2001).

My journey to phronesis as a methodology has made use of other epistemologies. This has included psychosocial methods, to which I was drawn because of the application of psychotherapeutic analytical concepts. These include an emphasis on researching *what is beneath* by exploring what may be implied unconsciously in data, for example by noting non-verbal factors such as tone of voice or hesitations (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000; Clarke, 2018). This influence has allowed me to make use of my professional knowledge as a therapist. For example, I have used ideas about containment (Bion, 1970) as a framework for the analysis of individual school counsellors' accounts of information sharing. Using prior professional knowledge is in accordance with Landman's (2012) assertion that phronetic researchers need to consider the experience and expertise they themselves bring to projects. I have also been influenced by narrative inquiry and '*how and why incidents are storied*' in dialogic contexts (Riessman, 2008:11). This narrative focus elucidates how accounts are performed and chronicled to develop identities (Bruner, 1990). Drawing upon this tradition has also allowed for the intentions behind communications to be considered (Mishler, 1991; Riessman, 2008). These influences have added depth and complexity, especially to my second level of data analysis. However, I acknowledge that narrative inquiry places greater emphasis on emancipation through the research process whereas this project's overall phronetic stance sees it as arising from its findings (Schram, 2004; Landman, 2012; Eubanks, 2012). Trnavcevic and Biloslavo (2017) refer to phronetic bricolage to signify how the practical wisdom of researchers and methodologies can be both constructed and continually under construction in a value-based research-approach. It is in this spirit that my description of my

methodology continues. By outlining the value of phronesis to this research, I fully acknowledge my *recycling* of the practical wisdom from other qualitative approaches. To this end, I eschew spending time exploring the deficits of either taking a psychosocial or narrative approach, as I believe I could have constructed equally viable and intriguing alternative research around either of these methodologies.

The sections that follows detail why I finally selected phronesis as the best overall framework to explore participants' perceptions of how young people and school counsellors navigate relationships and trust during information sharing.

Phronesis as Contextual Knowledge in Human Action

'Phronesis begins with the turning away from ideas and theory, and depending instead on the observation of practice that can be trusted' (Frank, 2012:49)

Phronesis has been described as the *Practical Turn*, as it is concerned with what happens in practice (Brown, 2012). This does not imply that it is concerned with the type of practical knowledge used to make things, but rather a practical understanding of human action linked to specific contexts. This idea draws on Flyvbjerg's (2001) reinvigorating of Aristotle's tripartite characterisation of forms of knowledge (or types of deliberation) which contrasts phronesis with other 'intellectual virtues' as outlined below:

Forms of Knowledge

1. Episteme-the search for a universal truth or theory which could be said to dominate approaches to research within the natural sciences.
2. Techne-technical know-how, craft or skill that produces physical objects and goods.
3. Phronesis-the practical wisdom needed to govern action in the human realm.
(Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics: 1955; Flyvbjerg 2001)

Episteme is the search for abstract universal theories and the identification of law-like relationships in the material world. It is deeply embedded in conceptions of science and the 'scientific'. Both techne and phronesis, are concerned with types of practical action. Techne is the application of technical knowledge, craft and skill such as how to fashion a pot or build an engine. It is the root word for technology and technique and concerned with making objects

(Polkinghorne, 2004). Phronesis, by contrast, is the practical wisdom needed to deliberate and make decisions about human action. For Aristotle, it is the form of knowledge that is responsible for the situated appraisal of what is ethically right and is therefore fundamental for determining *praxis*, or good action. Foucault (1991) regarded phronesis as the form of knowledge that permits humans to chase away false opinions and make good decisions.

Phronesis is needed to determine *what to do* with the outputs of the other forms of knowledge such as the development of scientific laws and technological skills and production (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Thus, although a scientist may make discoveries in human genetics, phronesis is necessary to determine how best to apply this knowledge '*for the good*'. It is a form of deliberation that can apprehend competing values and multiple consequences of action within a specific context (Nussbaum, 2001; Polkinghorne, 2004). Aristotle suggests '*it must take cognizance of particulars, because it is concerned with conduct and conduct has its sphere in particular circumstance*' (Nicomachean Ethics: 1955:154). Schram (2012:16) suggests phronesis understands '*the contingencies and uncertainties of any particular social practice*'. It is the form of knowledge needed to make decisions about how to act in the face of moral complexity. This is especially relevant to contemporary professional practice with human subjects where competing priorities and limited resources are endemic (Kinsella and Pitman, 2012). Phronesis is therefore necessary to make 'good' choices in complex human situations. If, according to Foucault, '*everything is dangerous*', it is phronesis that allows people to determine where the main danger may lie (Rabinow and Rose, 2003:104-5). This makes phronesis an especially valuable approach for exploring the sensitivity of school counsellor information sharing.

Phronesis as an Epistemology

Flyvbjerg (2001) joins a range of other scholars who have sought to re-engage with Aristotle's ideas about phronesis as a potential for countering the perceived domination of technological and scientific thinking in contemporary social research and society¹¹. Flyvbjerg argues that if intelligent social action requires phronesis, such knowledge that is sensitive to context is the rightful focus of social science research. He criticizes the drive in social science to ape the natural sciences by seeking to formulate universal laws about human behaviour and social

¹¹ These thinkers include Lyotard, Arendt, Gadamer, Heidegger, Habermas and Bernstein.

action. Flyvbjerg (2001) suggests that when researching the actions of human subjects in naturalistic settings, the search for predictive laws fails to reflect accurately or comprehensively the complexity and 'humaneness' of human action (Todres, 2007). Such research interprets the interpreters - described by some as the 'double hermeneutic' (Giddens, 1987; Delanty, 2005). It seeks to uncover patterns that are not universal but like an Escher painting, there is continual movement whose beginning, ending and meaning depends on the vantage point of observation.

Flyvbjerg's (2001) formulation of this epistemology borrows ideas from Bourdieu about social actors as '*strategic improvisers*' who respond to the opportunities and constraints of various situations (Bourdieu, 1977). There is a balancing out of the inventive and habituated form of action and thus phronesis is embedded in the 'feel for the game' of a particular field. Dreyfus' (1986) five-tiered model of human learning describes the most 'true human experts' who may not necessarily need to use 'rules' as they 'recognise thousands of cases holistically based on their experience' (Flyvbjerg 2001: 20). This suggests an embodied holistic knowing that is processed below conscious analytical knowing that may appear to be intuitive action (Dreyfus, 1986; Schram, 2012; Shotter and Tsoukas, 2014). Social actors progress from *Novices* who follow rules regardless of context to *True Human Experts* who can become 'unconsciously expert' as they come to increasingly rely on embodied action informed by non-conscious responses, as is illustrated in Figure 4 (Dreyfus, 1986; Schram, 2012). Dreyfus suggests that *True Human Experts* seem to be able to formulate an effective but seemingly effortless response, that is not only based on their previous experience, but one which appraises what is uniquely necessary to do in specific situations. Eraut (1994) criticises this model for over-emphasising implicit, intuitive and tacit learning and neglecting calculative, cognitive and reflective self-criticism. Whilst the deliberative and cognitive aspects of learning (and decision-making) are important, Dreyfus' model is confirmed by ideas from Damasio (2000, 2012) as discussed in Chapter 3, about the embodied, affective and often non-conscious nature of thinking. Dreyfus (2013) later developed two extra stages influenced by Aristotle's, Heidegger's and Foucault's ideas about the cultural dimensions of meaning and value. These were entitled 'Mastery' and 'Practical wisdom', the last of which is concerned

with morally skilled perception, ethical inter-dependence and ongoing reflexive learning.¹² These are skills vital for counselling practice (Wiggins, 2001).

Figure 4: Dreyfus' (1986) Tiers of Human Expertise



Flyvbjerg makes use of Dreyfus' ideas to describe phronesis as situated in the interactions between people and therefore as a dialogic form of deliberation that underpins decisions made in cognizant situations whose outcomes cannot necessarily be predicted (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Phronetic social science is centrally concerned with researching practice in context and hence not what '*is true*', as this depends upon the point of observation, but rather what is '*good to do*' in the perception of people in specific contexts (Schram, 2012: 19). It should make participants' judgements visible by emphasising 'little things' in specific contexts and by looking at practice that 'can be trusted' (Flyvbjerg, 2001:139). Phronetic social science explores a phenomenon by analysing narratives and case studies to illuminate the contingencies of practice and social actors' judgements about how best to act¹³.

Researching Ethical Practice

Whilst most professions make use of knowledge that is theoretical and technical, phronesis describes the application of professional expertise to practice situations working alongside

¹²For a full exploration of these extra stages, see McPhearson, (2013).

¹³ The construction of the case study of this project including decisions about the sampling of participants and the choice of The Place2Be as a context is described in detail in Chapter 7.

human subjects. This requires an evaluation of what is unique about a situation or case (Kinsella, 2012) and encompasses the idea that the right action for one person may not be the right action for another. Polkinghorne (2004:117) suggests that

'Phronetic deliberation requires that agents approach each new situation prepared to see what is different and unique about it.'

Such ethical relativism or *ethical mindfulness* in counselling practice draws on Aristotle's ideas about virtue ethics and right action (see Proctor 2014 and Bond 2015). Wiggins (2001) describes a process of 'practical insight' or situational appraisal of a person's predicament that draws on an empathic reaction to clients. Through this process, counsellors allow themselves to be influenced inter-subjectively by clients and their unique stories and formulating the best way forward (Stern, 1985; Hughes, 2009). Reeves (2015) comments on the importance of both counsellor resourcefulness and ethical responsiveness to client's diverse needs. Phronetic research offers the potential to illuminate how reflexivity is implicated in ethical decision-making (Manning, 2012). It seeks to determine '*what can and should be done and also how to do it*' (Schram 2012, p.19). This is an approach that interconnects with feminist, phenomenological and narrative ideas about the role of narratives and affect in moral decision-making (see Chapter 3).

Phronesis as a Methodology for Counselling Research

A growing body of literature uses ideas about practical wisdom as a lens to explore professional decision-making within medical diagnosis, social work education, management and education (see Schleifer and Vanatta, 2011; Robbins, 2012; Florian and Graham, 2014). For example, Russell and Greenhaulgh (2014) use phronesis as a lens for theorizing rationing decisions in the NHS and argue for a greater attention to narrative ethics and the subjective experiences rather than the technical rationality often recorded in official reports. Scourfield (2011) explores social worker decision-making finding that the process includes a mixture of technical assessments and reference to professional guidance intermingled with personal reactions to individual narratives, references to previous case experience and intuition. Participants were often less willing to discuss these more subjective processes when discussing decision-making.

The relevance of phronesis to counselling practice judgment and research has been noted by Frank (2006) and Canavan (2009). A growing body of counsellor educators and researchers have called for the development of phronetic methodologies within counselling (see Smythe, et al., 2009; Holliday, 2015; Punzi, 2015; Fuller and Holliday, 2016; Wyatt, 2017). In addition, Wampold and Imel's (2015) largescale review of psychotherapy studies suggests a contextual model of practice better fits the evidence of what works in therapy than a medical model based on the selective application of specific techniques. If true, counselling would benefit from developing contextual methodologies such as phronesis, to explore the processes that make it effective. My research is one attempt to take forward these ideas.

Phronesis and Power

Flyvbjerg's reimaging of phronesis includes a postmodern and Foucauldian recognition of the pervasiveness of power in all social situations (Delanty, 2005). This encourages a focus not only on how professionals really make decisions in complex human situations, but also the mechanisms of power that are enacted through these encounters. Flyvbjerg (2001) suggests phronetic case study research should consider the most local power relations, and how they operate. I have therefore reflected on how power is experienced, propagated and resisted by my participants (Foucault, 1991).

I have applied a relational framework and ideas about bricolage to make use of ideas from psychosocial methods to explore inner, as well as outer forces operating upon my professional participants (Lincoln and Denzin, 2000; Frosch, 2003; Clarke, 2018). However, my data has also led me to explore professional discourses associated with safeguarding. These include professionals' mis/use of psychodynamic theoretical concepts within SBC practice. For example, I have explored how professionals apply ideas such as containment to the experiences of young people in safeguarding processes (Bion, 1970). This has required me not only to describe what is said and hence what is permissible to be articulated, but also to 'look beneath' and interrogate my data, to determine what is hidden and what is forbidden in professional conversations about information sharing (Foucault in Hall, 2001; Flyvbjerg 2001: Riessman, 2008). Through these methods, I uncovered the experience of power and control in relationships between counsellors and school staff, and the implications for working alliances with young people. I also acknowledge the power of my own articulation and interpretation of

my research data. This leads me to the relationship between reflexive approaches and phronesis.

Phronesis and Reflexivity in Research

Phronetic knowledge encompasses the ability to reflect on and learn from experience (Smythe, et al., 2009). It interconnects with ideas about reflexivity and its role in both research and practice. Schön (1983; 1987) defines reflexivity as *reflection-in-action*; whereas reflection demands that we look back and think about what has happened, reflexivity involves thinking about what is happening in the here and now and responding by adapting practice. It is not a form of withdrawal but rather '*withness thinking*', the ability to reflect and decide what to do amidst the puzzling tension of active practice (Schön, 1983; Shotter, & Tsoukas, 2014:391). It pertains equally to those factors that allow my professional participants to reflect in the midst of their own practice and my ability to reflect in the midst of this research process and allow the data and my participants to matter to me (Shotter & Tsoukas, 2014). Finlay (2003) describes reflexivity as mutual collaboration and social critique that involves a facilitation of the voice of the unheard, an acknowledgement of tensions and multiplicities of voice, alongside an unravelling of the voice of authority. Reflexivity in research therefore provides a vehicle to encourage conversations about the impact of power differentials with participants or to lessen them (Etherington, 2004; Alderson and Morrow, 2011). The importance of reflexivity in qualitative research is certainly not unique to phronetic social science. However, I note Lancione (2013) asserts that its central concern with deliberation on ethical action and interest in processes of power, make phronesis an ideal '*trans-disciplinary meta-container*' that can be drawn upon by reflexive scholars of any discipline.

Phronesis and Transformation

Flyvbjerg, Landman and Schram (2013) suggest that phronetic research is relevant to *real people* experiencing *real problems* and its success should be measured by its transformative impact. The task of researchers is to '*clarify and deliberate about the problems and risks we face and to outline how things may be done differently*' (Flyvbjerg, 2001:140). This acknowledges feminist and Marxist critiques of the inter-relationship between theory, research and social action (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Schram, 2012). In my decision to carry out a phronetic inquiry, I make a clear link between the research, and how it can develop *real-world*

practice for the better. This draws on ideas about the value of case study in developing theory (Stiles, 2007) and developing counselling practice in accordance with the ideas of the *Practice-Based Evidence* movement which aims to make research more accessible for practitioners and practice more accessible to research (see Barkham, 2010). The contribution of this research incorporates an aim to develop the practice of school counsellors in how they relate to young people when sharing information.

School Counsellor Information Sharing as a Tension Point

Phronesis as a form of deliberation '*becomes visible only at moments of confrontation when something of significance is at stake*' (Flyvbjerg, 2012:64). These situations have been described as *tension points* (Schram, Flyvbjerg and Landman, 2014). Counsellor's practice in working alongside young people during information sharing can be regarded as such a tension point. In Chapter 2, I discussed how disclosures are times of precarity, vulnerability, significance and opportunity for individual young people (Linell, 2017; Reeves, 2015). Chapter 3 charted how multi-professional information sharing is widely heralded as good practice, supported and regulated through safeguarding policy guidance but it is also an area of potential conflict (see Munro, 2011). Different applications of ethical codes exist between different disciplines and professions (law, child protection social work, medicine, education, counselling) and there are widespread debates about how to reconcile young people's rights to protection and autonomy (see Carnevale, 2015). Significant professional tensions exist between counselling and education concerning offering confidentiality to students in schools (Hamilton-Roberts, 2012). In addition, professional cultural practices and communication styles can create obstacles to sharing information which can potentially impact upon the safety of vulnerable young people (Thompson, 2010). Some researchers highlight the domination of information bureaucracy in the UK and an allied loss of focus on engaging with young people (Parton, 2006; Ruch, 2013; Trevithick, 2014). There has been widespread debate about the imposition of mandatory reporting of child abuse and the possible consequences for professional practices (Ainsworth and Hansen, 2006; NSPCC, 2014; Long and Blow, Parliamentary Note, 25:9: 2014). Overall, these factors lead me to contend that SBC information sharing is:

1. Of wide concern.
2. An area of potential inter-professional tension.

3. An area of potential conflict between young people and those adult professionals who seek to ensure their welfare.
4. An area where there are different professional cultures and ethical codes and hence applications of what is regarded as good practice.

I now turn to the development of my research questions and outline their relevance for phronetic research.

Developing my Research Questions

To recap, my over-arching research concern is focused on my groups of participants' perceptions of this topic:

How do young people and school-based counsellors navigate relationships during information sharing to maintain trust in working alliances?

This over-arching research theme has remained largely unchanged since developing the proposal for this project. However, my original title and subsidiary questions have been adapted in response to fieldwork and to the data emerging from my participants. I developed my original title '*Can I Trust You? Ethics considerations for secondary school counsellors in information sharing and multi-professional working*', around the assumption that information sharing was an ethical dilemma for school counsellors. Based on previous research from Jenkins and Palmer (2012), I assumed that counsellors were actively weighing up competing ethical principles such as autonomy and fidelity (trust) and beneficence (promoting well-being) when deciding whether to share young people's information (BACP, 2012). This initial focus arose out of my personal experience working as a school counsellor. As my fieldwork developed it became clear that counsellor participants were not *explicitly* formulating information sharing as a dilemma. However, exploring below the surface of my data revealed some counsellors' personal misgivings about safeguarding processes and conflicting values. However, both adult and young participants placed greater emphasis on dilemmas faced by *young people* when deciding to disclose that they were at risk. This led me to develop a tighter focus on trust in counselling relationships with young people and to *how* to maintain alliances during information sharing. During fieldwork and initial analysis, I therefore focused more closely on perceptions of what *helped* to maintain this trust in counselling relationships. This echoes the emphasis on trust in a variety of contemporary safeguarding research and policy guidance (See Jobe and Gorin, 2013; Cossar et al., 2014; Lefevre et al , 2017; Linell, 2017).

The focus on 'how' to work alongside young people, rather than dilemmas about 'when' or 'if' to share information, was also a deliberate attempt to foil potential contention around this research and to avoid inter-professional (social worker-teacher-counsellor) tension. My intention was to encourage an authentic reflexive approach from my professional participants by trying to limit the anxiety generated by taking part in this study. This was important as SBC anxiety surrounding safeguarding had previously been identified (Jenkins and Palmer, 2012). Schram et al. (2014) warn that in researching areas of significant public or professional concern there is a danger that *tension points bite back* through contention about research findings. In the section of my research journal below I reflect on these ideas.

By focusing on 'how' information is shared rather than 'if' or 'when' I hope I can stop everyone from manning their professional 'barricades'-social worker against teacher against counsellor... I want to prevent the red mist and anxiety that descends- at the mere suggestion that young people's vulnerabilities may be withheld....To avoid the polarized positions between best interests and protection, versus autonomy and confidentiality.

*What I want is to be able to hold the research space open enough to allow thinking space and reflection from my participants so they can really use their phronesis to think about how to make these situations as **good** as they can be- their views on the best ways to keep the trust going **when** information **is** shared (good and ethical practice). This keeps the focus more tightly on how the counsellor works with the young person. This will mean as much as possible keeping out the fire about **if** and **when** information should be shared. Somebody else can do that research!*

In shifting away from ideas about formulating ethical *dilemmas for the counsellor*, I allowed a greater focus on the young person's perspective to emerge. Although, professional relationships between counsellors and DSLs are examined in detail, the purposes of this examination is primarily to explore the impact of these outer processes on how the counsellors relate to young people.

Flyvbjerg (2001; 2012) suggests that phronetic research should be centred on three questions that are detailed below. My expansions and explanations of these questions are written in italics.

1. Where are we going? *This requires an emphasis on what is currently happening and the direction of movement, within a social context.*

2. Is it desirable? *Do the people involved in this issue feel that what is currently happening is for the good? This requires the researcher to explore perceptions of the ethics of current practice.*

3. What should be done? *What do the participants think should happen to make this situation the best it can be? This is a question about potential transformation.*

He later added a fourth question about the specific mechanisms of power in local contexts considering the emphasis discussed above.

4. Who gains and who loses by which mechanisms of power? *How is power enacted/experienced and what are the consequences for different participants?*

Below, I review my specific research questions and suggest how they inter-relate with the aims of phronetic research. I am not inferring a neat correlation between Flyvbjerg's questions and the main research questions of this project. Rather, I am seeking to demonstrate the ways in which a phronetic approach has influenced my overall research focus, intention and design.

In accordance with Flyvbjerg's primary focus, the first two research questions (RQ1 & 2) centre on what is currently happening in counselling relationships with young people during information sharing (*where are we going*) and participants' views of the impact on trust in alliances or the 'rightness' of this (*is it desirable?*). This leads to an examination of participants' views of practice that support trust in alliances with young people (RQ3) (*what should be done?*). This requires all my participants to use their phronesis to offer views of best practice in this area. The next research question (RQ4) seeks to explore the factors that support or obstruct school counsellors from being able to practice in ways in which help maintain trusting alliances with young people. This question emerged later as a response to my data as a way of exploring the reality of the relational and affective contexts in which school counsellors work. This research question (RQ4) is created to draw out participants' experiences of the way power is enacted in professional relationships during safeguarding processes and how this may also potentially impact upon alliances with young people (*who gains and who loses*). I have also sought to stay alert to experiences and processes of power throughout my analysis of all other research questions. This is perhaps most evident in attending to the young people's views of information sharing. As will be seen, power also strongly emerges as a theme in the professionals' accounts of their experiences of current

information sharing practice. The last research question (RQ5) is designed to consider how conversations in the data between young people, DSLs and counsellors (and the dis/connects that emerge), contribute to a theory of practice in school counselling information sharing. This question considers the possibility for impact arising from this study.

Table 1: Research Questions and their Relationship to the Aims of Phronetic Research

Research Questions- 'The Trust is the Work'	Flyvbjerg's Phronetic Research Questions
1. How do young people and school-based counsellors navigate relationships through information sharing?	<i>1. Where are we going? What is currently happening and what is the direction of movement?</i>
2. What are the implications for maintaining trust in working alliances with young people through information sharing processes?	<i>2. Is it desirable?</i>
3. What processes support trust in relationships with young people?	<i>3. What should be done? What do the participants think should happen to make this situation the best it can be?</i>
4. What factors facilitate or impede school counsellors' ability to maintain trust in working alliances with young people?	<i>4. Who gains and who loses by which mechanisms of power?</i>
5. How do the dis/connections between the practical wisdom of young people and professionals (SBCs and DSLs) contribute to school counselling practice knowledge in this area?	<i>3. What should be done? This aims to distil different participants' practical wisdom to develop theory that has potential to influence practice in this area.</i>

I now evaluate the criticisms of adopting a phronetic approach.

Critiques of Phronesis

Flyvbjerg, Landman and Schram (2013) assert that the success of phronetic research needs to be measured by its transformative impact in areas of public concern. This suggestion has been criticised by Halton (2014) for grand methodological idealism. He proposes that there is a danger that this stance discounts research that concentrates on developing theory rather than on enacting social change. This might make phronesis an approach whose validity is wholly dependent upon how it is received and good research output is easily ignored. I was initially persuaded by some of these criticisms, as the development of theory is vital as it often works in the longer term towards social transformation and indeed, as will be seen this purpose is central to this study.

Laitin (2003) suggests that phronesis, though a useful concept, is only fully valid when combined with a scientific frame that includes statistical methods. Some critique the over-emphasis in phronesis on contextual narratives and hence the development of research questions that can only be answered through case study (Delanty, 2005) and for giving little attention to problem-solving and lacking a critical distance from the phenomenon explored (Gereluk, 2002; Fitzpatrik, 2011). However, I believe that the value of contextual methodologies lies not in their predictive or explanatory power, but rather in their depth of analysis and reflexive positioning (Delanty, 2005). This is research that formulates social science as a form of communication that does not seek to disengage itself from the subject of inquiry, and recognises the fluid and social constructed nature of the social world (Schram, 2004). This methodology also boldly asserts the public role of research as an endeavour.

Other commentators argue that the development of a phronetic social science relies on an unhelpful polarization between positivist and qualitative methodologies that fails to account for developments in post-positivist research and the integrating value of pragmatic mixed method approaches (Delanty, 2005; Hawkesworth, 2006; Fitzpatrik, 2011). Indeed, Flyvbjerg, Landman and Schram (2014) also highlight the value of pragmatic mixed methods case study. The domination of instrumental rationality is recognized by many commentators (Pokinghorne, 2004; Frank, 2006). This highlights that positivist ideas are not necessarily benign companions to case study research in contemporary public discourse where the

clamour for ‘facts’ and predictive relationships and quick fixes can leave contextual research over-shadowed as the poor relation. Phronesis potentially offers a robust argument for a re-balancing of the research pendulum in favour of engaging reflexively with the contextual and narrative detail of a phenomenon (Cornish, 2012).

Others have also pointed to the conflicting and confusing interpretations of phronesis as a concept and the need for further precision of definition (Fitzpatrick, 2011; Florian and Graham, 2014). I accept that contemporary distance from the ideas and language of phronesis means that more needs to be done to recognize, conceptualise and delineate this form of practical knowledge and its methodological implications (See Dunne, 1993). However, meanings are often consolidated by illustration and application, whereby this thesis itself becomes part of a process of formulating what it means to be engaged in phronetic research in counselling.

Eubanks (2012) suggests that the phronetic emphasis on power, social transformation and an inter-subjective relationship is highly resonant of feminist research. I accept this and recognize that other qualitative methodologies such as narrative inquiry offer their own *practical wisdom* and a concern with reflexivity, values and power and seek to use research to encourage emancipation. Clearly, some of these approaches predate the re-imagining of phronetic social science by Flyvbjerg (2001). However, the phronetic emphasis on the human processes that determine ethical action within specific contexts, make this methodology highly pertinent to this exploration of school counsellor information sharing practice. In asserting this, I note Flyvbjerg’s claims that the role of phronetic social science is not only to intervene (or transform) but also to ‘clarify’, to ‘understand the present’ and ‘deliberate’ on the future (Flyvbjerg, 2001:166). For me, this is a worthy set of propositions with which to conduct social research.

Conclusion

I have outlined the ontological and epistemological basis of phronetic case study research and illuminated its pertinence to this project. I have introduced the concept of phronetic bricolage (Trnavcevic and Biloslavo, 2017), and its use of a variety of methodological lenses in an emergent process to capture the humanness of school counselling practice. This case study, utilises the practical wisdom of participants to seek to develop ethical practice in school counsellor information sharing. I have excavated participants’ views of current practice, their experiences of power through these processes and how they believe safeguarding practice

could best be developed. I focused on how to maintain trust in therapeutic alliances when sharing information, by acknowledging the phenomenological and dialogical contexts in which school counselling practice takes place.

I have outlined an increasing focus on the relevance of phronesis to support contextual and reflexive research within counselling (See Smythe et al., 2009; Holliday, 2015; Fuller and Holliday, 2016; Wyatt, 2017). In response, this thesis has been an original attempt to apply a phronetic approach to a PhD counselling project. As such, its role has been to formulate how a phronetic counselling project may be constructed and to elucidate the opportunities and limitations of this approach.

Chapter 5: 'A Polyphony of Voices': The Research Process

Introduction

In this chapter, I outline my research design for this multi-dimensional case study of school counsellor information sharing. This research adapts Flyvbjerg's (2001: 139) ideas about using a 'polyphony of voices' in phronetic research by exploring the perspectives of **school-based counsellors** (SBCs), **young people** who have previously used school counselling services, and school **designated safeguarding leads** (DSLs). I aimed to create interactive dialogue between data from different participants/groups to distil their practical wisdom to contribute to SBC practice knowledge. I used a combination of semi-structured and interactive group interviews using a fictional information vignette as stimulation for discussion, and a film of professionals' views for the young participants to critique. My iterative research design sought to explore converging lines of inquiry to construct a naturalistic, multi-dimensional picture of how school counsellors and young people navigate relationships through information sharing (Yin, 2009).

I firstly consider the methodological implications of choosing the Place2Be as a case study before setting out my reflexive and ethical positioning. I detail my iterative research process and describe and justify my two-stage data analysis process including a thematic analysis across participants/groups and a focused psychosocial influenced narrative analysis of selected counsellor accounts. Throughout, I adopt a reflexive stance to the dilemmas and disappointments that arose by using short excerpts from my reflective journal (Etherington, 2004; Finlay and Gough, 2008). With the inclusion of this journal material, I seek to add to the validity and trustworthiness of this case study (McLeod, 2010).

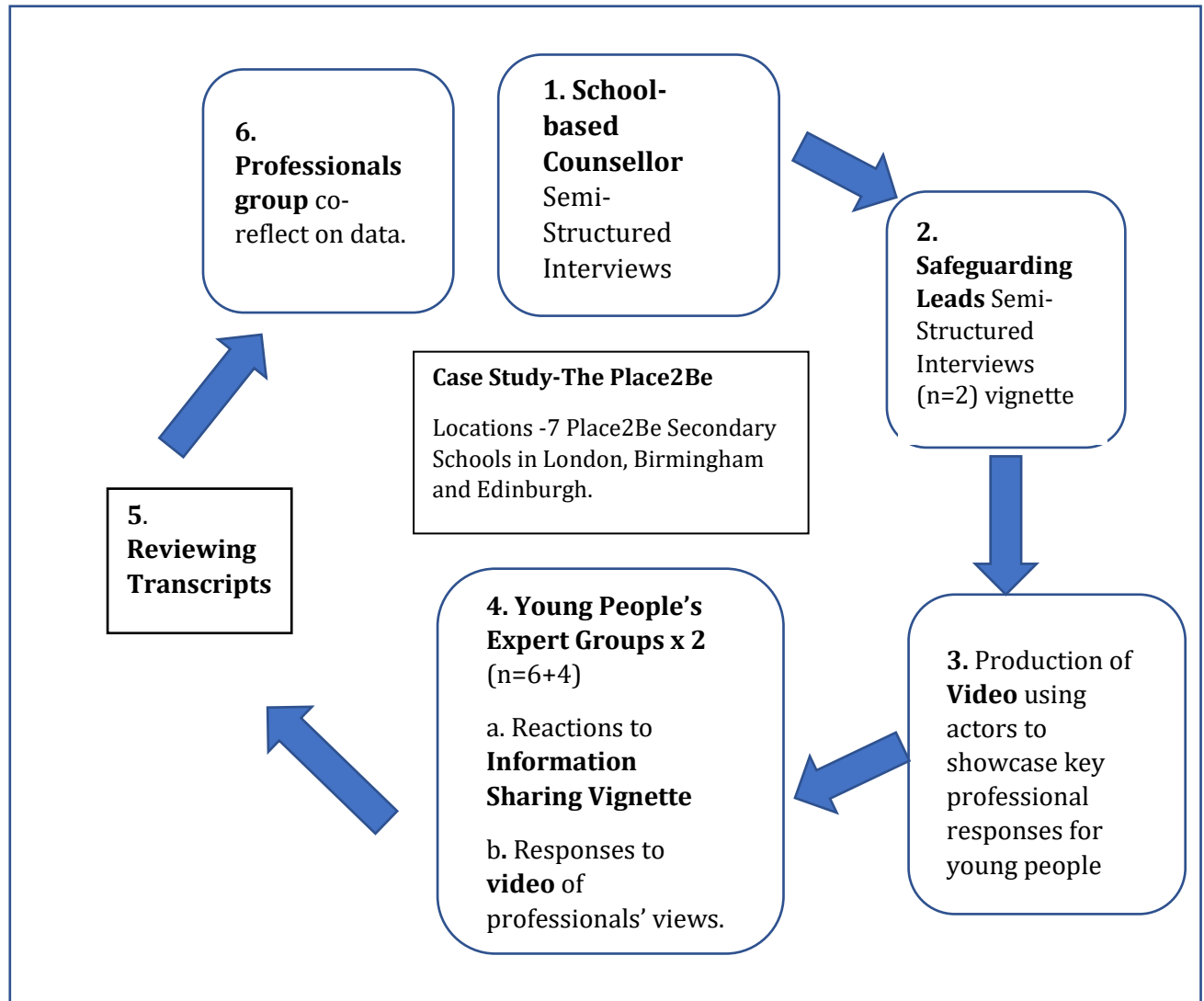
In Figure 5, I offer a brief reminder of my central research theme followed by a diagrammatic overview of my iterative research design. This diagram inevitably represents a simplification of the research processes that involved a web of inter-connected stages, pauses for reflection and communicative response loops (Tanggaard, 2013).

Research design

My over-arching research theme is concerned with participants' perceptions of the following:

How do young people and school-based counsellors navigate relationships during information sharing and maintain trust in working alliance?

Figure 5: Stages of the Iterative Research Design



The Place2Be as a Case Study

As the largest provider of school-based counselling in the UK the 'Place2be' runs SBC services in over 282 primary and secondary schools across the UK (The Place2Be, 2018). The Place2Be model offers the provision of ongoing one to one counselling, themed group work and lunchtime 'drop in' services for students called 'Place2Talk' and teacher training and

consultation (Place2Be, 2018). In the academic year, 2016/17 Place2Be supported 5,618 children and young people through 84,709 one to one counselling sessions (Place2Be, 2018). Much of the agency's funding comes directly from school budgets. Place2Be primary school counselling services have been demonstrated to be associated with significant reductions in psychological distress in evaluation studies (Lee et al, 2009; Daniunaite et al., 2015). However, there is little comparative external research into their secondary provision which has developed later in the organisations' history. The Place2Be service model uses a combination of experienced and voluntary counsellors (Place2Be, 2018). Each school has an onsite salaried counsellor termed 'School Practice Managers' (SPMs) who is often professionally accredited and are responsible for offering onsite supervision for several voluntary colleagues in their school. It is these more experienced counsellors who took part in this research. The agency manages the counselling teams in location clusters and provides off site clinical supervision for school practice managers, continuing practitioner development for staff and a central safeguarding advice and management structure. The central safeguarding team provides training, develops agency protocols, and provides monitoring and support on individual cases. The Place2Be provision is relatively typical in modality amongst school counselling provision, offering integrative interventions with counsellors who are drawn from a range of orientations - primarily Person Centred/humanistic, psychodynamic and systemic therapists (Daniunaite et al., 2015). As an organisation it advocates the use of play therapy and creative approaches to facilitate developmentally sensitive communication with children and young people (Lee et al., 2009; DfE, 2016). These creative and play methods are widespread across its primary provision but also extend to some degree into its lower secondary work. The agency advocates a non-directive approach, recommending that children and young people set the agenda for counselling sessions (DfE, 2016). This practice and training model is strongly influenced by attachment theory and associated research in affect-regulation, and their value in therapeutic work (Place2Be, 2015). Below, I explore my pre-conceptions about the Place2Be.

The Place2Be as a Case: Pre-Conceptions

Prior to undertaking this project, I knew the clinical director of the Place2Be professionally, as we had both previously worked as counselling tutors at the Faculty of Education in Cambridge. This connection helped facilitate initial access to the Place2Be networks, for which I am extremely grateful. My role as a counselling tutor involved working with several students

who carried out placements with the organisation. These connections inevitably meant that I started this case study with some pre-conceptions, which I now reflexively acknowledge.

Before the inception of this study, I was a supporter of the Place2Be and the leading role it has played in promoting a whole school approach to supporting children and young people's emotional health and providing school counselling across the UK (Place2Be, 2015). At the same time, I had reservations about the organisations' lack of consideration of young people's capacities and rights to participation (UNCRC, 1990). These reservations arose whilst engaged in contemporaneous therapeutic work for the NSPCC, in which role I had regular experience of involving young people in service and policy development. This inevitably evoked a comparison between these two children's charities. Below is a short extract from my reflective journal, which acknowledges these preconceptions.

...they (The Place2Be) are such champions for listening to children and young people-and developing understanding and holistic support for them in schools- but the organisation seems conversely overly adult centric and paternalistic somehow. Does their direct funding from schools' budgets play a role in this focus? If your agency survival depends on money from schools does that mean that you have to assimilate the culture of schools to survive?

To address these preconceptions, I met the Place2Be national safeguarding manager, the national clinical director, head of secondary provision and the Place2Be research coordinator several times during the preparation, fieldwork and dissemination stages of this research. This gave me a detailed opportunity to observe first-hand the culture, priorities and ethos of the management of organization. I consciously attempted to remain open to the positions of professionals and young people during my fieldwork.

My second significant preconception in developing this project was that I started with the belief that sharing information was likely to present significant ethical dilemmas for the school counsellors involved. This was based on my knowledge of the research and professional guidance literature in this area, which emphasized the weighing up of ethical principles in decisions to share information, as described in Chapter 1, 2 and 3 (See Daniels and Jenkins, 2010; Jenkins and Palmer, 2012; Fuller, 2014). I was also influenced by my insider perspective, having previously worked as a school counsellor (Etherington, 2000). I now regard my former position as simplification of the complex professional, organisational and relational situations that school counsellors find themselves in which cannot be reduced to cognitive weighing up of abstract principles or applying ethical codes. I also believe my

previous focus on counsellor dilemmas failed to capture the more serious dilemmas faced by young people in trusting professionals to make disclosures.

Information Sharing at the Place2Be: A Distinctive Case

If case study requires a bounded system, held in common in this research is the Place2Be's therapeutic approach, culture, service structure, safeguarding procedures and the context of sharing information from secondary school counselling sessions (Yin, 2009; Cresswell, 2012). I chose case study as a method that allows for multiple views of a complex human phenomenon within a naturalistic setting (Stake, 2005). This can generate data that incorporates the ambiguities of human action (Merriam, 1998). This is in line with earlier discussions about the significance of context-dependent decision-making. Robson and McCartan (2016:150) assert that case study involves *'empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence'*. As a methodology, its strength lies in its ability to explore the complexity of life and offer its readers an expansive, rich and deep understanding (Geertz, 1973; Cohen et al., 2011). To be valuable this approach needs to 'dig into' meanings in depth. Triangulation from different participants/groups supports this process by also exploring a broad perspective and converging lines of inquiry whilst allowing for the detailed investigation of areas of dissonance (Yin, 2009).

For Stake (2005), the value of cases lay in their ability to convey an experiential understanding of the complexity of a phenomenon. This requires studies to be believable, accessible and trustworthy and hold the attention of the reader (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). Thomas (2010: 30) took forward Stake's ideas about naturalistic generalisations to highlight *'Phronesis sits in the personhood of the researcher and the reader, and it is here, that I see the transferability...coming into play...'*. This points to the value of case study not as 'context-free' knowledge, often regarded as the touchstone of generalization, but rather as an exemplar from which insight may be gained that may be valuable to other contexts, through the application of both the researcher's and reader's phronesis. Such *transferability* is distinct from ideas about external generalizability, about which case study is most often criticised (Flyvbjerg, 2006). This refers to the extent to which an individual reader is able to apply their practical wisdom to adapt the findings and consider their relevance to a different setting (Morrow, 2005). For me, this required being transparent about my role as interpreter and

providing a coherent approach to the development of research themes so that my readers may meaningfully reflect upon their validity. McLeod (2010) asserts that transferability is achieved by theory building which can be thought about as a way of making sense of the area studied. I subscribe to Stiles' (2007) idea that a theory is not a fixed entity but a way of understanding that may change, be adapted, refined, modified or qualified. New conceptual frameworks can be developed, re-applied and re-tested in different cases and contexts. I also took seriously Yin's (2010) argument for the value of analytic generalization which allows good case study to elucidate valuable insights that may be relevant for other contexts, providing that it is sufficiently grounded in existing research literature and theory. I aimed to make my data analysis process credible and dependable by being rigorous and explicit about my processes of analysis. I also aimed for an '*ever-reflexive*' stance that acknowledges my positioning and offers a detailed exploration of the theoretical ideas that have influenced my research process and theory building (Stake, 2005: 450).

I note Flyvbjerg's (2006) powerful critique of the adage that it is *not possible to generalize from case study* that highlights the significance of the choice of case. He uses the analogy of the significance of finding a 'black swan' to illustrate the value of cases in confirming or disconfirming phenomena. I originally chose the Place2be as a representative and therefore valid case study firstly, as it is the largest school counselling agency in the UK and thus provides more counselling sessions than any other provider (Lee et al, 2009; Daniunaite et al., 2015; Place2Be, 2018). However, further knowledge of the organisation acquired during fieldwork caused me to consider its more distinctive qualities.

Place2Be publicity emphasises its strong safeguarding policies prioritizing multi-professional working and '*robust data-keeping and reporting*' whilst offering young people what they describe as '*partial*' confidentiality (Place2be, 18: 2015). This approach to sharing information differs slightly in tone from both English and Welsh government guidance on confidentiality in school-based counselling (Hill, et al, 2011; DfE, 2016). The latest English guidance, whilst emphasizing the safeguarding 'limits' to confidentiality suggests that '*Ensuring confidentiality between the child or young person and counsellor is crucial to the success ...of counselling.* (DfE, 2016: 30). The Place2Be operates very low thresholds for sharing safeguarding information, placing it towards the far polarity of the integrated end of the spectrum of school counselling provision (Bond, 1991). This multi-professional and integrated approach is a distinctive feature of the organisation. This positioning provides an

important crucible for exploring how to maintain trust in counselling relationships when the sharing of information from sessions is frequent, and the levels of confidentiality offered to young people are comparatively low. Given the research evidence discussed in Chapter 2 regarding the value young people place on the confidentiality of school counselling, my expectation prior to fieldwork was that this '*partial*' confidentiality approach may be a significant challenge to the school counsellors. If Place2Be practitioners have greater experience of over-riding young people's confidentiality, are they then more able to distill what helps navigate trust in relationships through these processes? This may make my findings particularly illuminating. Conversely, it is possible to argue that other school counselling agencies are equally subject to the local authority and government guidelines on safeguarding and information sharing (DfE, 2016). There may not be much meaningful difference between the Place2Be and other providers when it comes to information sharing. The paucity of research in this area means that there is limited evidence available to evaluate fully this factor (Jenkins and Palmer, 2012). However, five of the six participating counsellors in my study also raised the difference between the Place2Be's approach to information sharing and safeguarding in comparison to other youth services. This factor was also commented on by both participating safeguarding leads. Indeed, Lawson (2016) excluded the organisation from her study on therapeutic boundaries in school counselling precisely because of its degree of multi-professional integration. In considering the value of this case study, I believe the Place2Be offers a microcosm of how SBCs navigate relationships when information sharing is more frequent, and confidentiality can be less relied upon as the basis of trust. This potentially illuminates the micro-processes that may help maintain trust between counsellors and young people.

Another distinctive factor is that the Place2Be has a centralized UK wide approach to safeguarding. This policy conformity allowed other influences on information sharing processes to be more visible. The narrative analysis specifically explored how the affective and relational context for individual school counsellors supports/obstructs the process of maintaining trust. This illuminated how contextual factors can influence safeguarding practices with young people. Whilst I do not claim that the Place2Be fully meets the criteria for a critical case study (Flyvbjerg, 2006), it does have several significant elements that make it indicative in illuminating **how** trust in counselling relationships may be maintained through information sharing, which may have wider relevance.

An Ethical Research Design

This was an ethically challenging project. It involved working with young people who are structurally disempowered and potentially vulnerable (Powell and Smith, 2006). They may also have been experiencing specific vulnerabilities that prompted the previous referrals to school counselling. This study also included counsellor participants who owe a duty of confidentiality to present and past clients and safeguarding leads who have sensitive knowledge about young people. If research into counselling is ethically challenging, it is also ethically necessary (West 2002; Proctor, 2014; Bond, 2015). Further, the ethical sensitivity of a project may sometimes indicate the ethical necessity for conducting research. This project offers the potential to improve professional practice with young people who are not only vulnerable because of the risk they face but vulnerable by virtue of their contact with adult professional safeguarding processes over which they may have little control (Sanders and Mace, 2006). This project has provided opportunities to develop perceptions of good practice and to give young people a platform to express their views on this vital area (Alderson and Morrow, 2011). I sought wherever possible to amplify the opinions and insight of young people and to work against the tendency for their views to be relegated. I attempted to make taking part in the research accessible, meaningful, interesting and enjoyable, whilst seeking to avoid it feeling too intrusive. Before detailing the practical measures, I undertook to minimise risks to participants, I briefly outline the origins of my ethical approach.

I draw on several theoretical ethical influences. Firstly, I am influenced by feminist ideas about 'ethics of care' and relational ethics where there is reciprocity and inter-dependence between myself as researcher, and my participants, where relationships matter in the research process (Nodding, 1984; Held, 2005; Bond, 2015). I have a responsibility towards my participants which is ongoing, inter-subjective and seeks to avoid 'hit and run' research ethics. This recognises the importance of bi-directional trust between researcher and participant as central to the research process (McLeod, 2010). Without trust, there is no data. The less trust there is with participants, the less reliable and less meaningful my data will become. I acknowledge the risks that my participants have taken in talking to me and aim to respect and honor that leap of faith (Bond 2015). I am also influenced by Person Centred formulations of accepting, genuine and understanding inter-personal relationships and I have sought to take this approach in my communications with participants and stakeholders (Mearns and Thorne, 2007). This approach combined with my phronetic stance by way of Dreyfus (1986) and

Bourdieu (1977) recognises and respects the expertise participants have of their contexts. I believe my authentic self is a useful resource that is a necessary part of dialogic research encounters and I have sought to avoid my input existing only below the horizon of this thesis (Charmaz and Mitchell, 1997). I acknowledge the importance of ethical mindfulness in research and I have sought to apply reflective 'practical insight' to dilemmas as they have arisen (Wiggins, 2001). Using ideas from narrative ethics, I have sought to stay alert to my affective response to interviews to consider how these may inform or influence my thinking through the research process (Nussbaum, 2000).

The Role of Reflexivity

Etherington (2004) highlights the value of reflexivity or awareness of, and open reflection on, personal responses, context and moral dilemmas that may otherwise remain implicit in research. Reflexivity contributed to the ethical framework of this project by honestly exploring dilemmas and ethical tensions. It is a familiar tool in counselling research and practice and was a common language with counsellor participants (Speedy, 2009; McLeod, 2010). A reflexive stance acknowledges the place of my professional story as context to this research and my awareness and ability to reflect on its impact and adds validity by helping this research process make sense for my audience (Moustakas, 1990; McLeod, 2010). I have sought to be transparent about my role and stance in interpreting my data (Giddens, 1987; McLeod, 2001). I noted a tendency to identify with the counsellors' position and I needed to reflect on the impact of this on my analysis. Reflexivity is regarded by some as 'subjectivity' and has been greatly contested (Speedy, 2009). However, I believe it is vital to acknowledge my active authorship of this thesis, and more honest to do this centrally than concealing implicit direction offstage (Charmaz and Mitchell, 1997; Etherington, 2004). Reflexivity can usefully provide a vehicle to encourage conversations about the impact of power differentials with participants and perhaps even lessen them (Etherington, 2004; Alderson and Morrow, 2011). I acknowledge the central role of the relationship between power and the production of knowledge with its potential use to oppress; in response, I sought to consider the impact of my analysis on my participants (Foucault, 1991).

Reflexive Journal

To realise my reflexive approach, I kept a research journal to reflect on my experiences during this project (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). This document charts my unguarded impressions, reflections and affective responses. I often used it to contain my frustrations and anxieties about my PhD journey. It allowed me to acknowledge my preconceptions and think through how affective experiences might have influenced data collection and analysis. I described individual interview and group processes, making field notes about first impressions of participants, locations, schools and the background context of interviews. I also used my journal to chart the trajectory of my thinking and theory building, formulating codes and themes and drawing diagrams of inter-connections. Although, I have not included direct quotes from my journal during the presentation of my data, it has supported my data analysis throughout this research. Moving through, I detailed annotations from my narrative analysis. I have used it to deliberate on the meanings and origins of my subjective experiences (McLeod, 2010). I have reflected on anxious messages from some participants and stakeholders. I have also reflected where my proactive-countertransference may be skewing my interpretation of data (Clarkson, 2004). As an example, a small section below reflects on my meeting with counsellor Frances (C5).

First impressions-soul-less corporate academy-desolate. I felt unsettled, lonely and nervous before the interview with Frances and kind of leaden and weighed down afterwards. I found it hard to get F to speak-was I pushing her too much? She looked so tired. I felt that she might be weighed down by her role. She talked about being '*off on the side of her school*' and the difficulty communicating. Like nobody listened to her-felt like she didn't matter. I realised that I left feeling her sense of simultaneous being weighed down and unimportant. So hard to know if these feelings are also projections -influenced by her clients.....Did my initial discomfort and PhD isolation influence our conversation and become confluent with her sense of burden?

Ethical Considerations

I was given ethical clearance from the University of Sussex Ethics Review Committee for this project. The process of seeking this clearance caused me to think through my selection and

sampling processes and how I would provide information about my research for my adult and young participants. I was mindful of guidance from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Framework for Research Ethics and the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) Ethical Guidelines for Research in the Counselling Professions (2018). The latter places primary importance on trust in the research process, both in terms of the trustworthiness and credibility of my output, but also the mutual trust between myself as researcher and my participants (Mitchells/BACP 2018). This required me to ensure that the participants of this study had an opportunity to gain a real-world understanding of the purpose, cost and benefits of the research before they gave consent to take part (Docket et al, 2013). With the young participants, dual consent was sought from parents/carers to attend to the power imbalance between adult researcher and young participant (Fine and Sandstrom, 1988; Anderson & Morrow 2008). Detailed information sheets were sent to adult professionals¹⁴. I also worked to develop youth accessible information pamphlets and presentations as well as versions aimed at parents/carers. All information sheets outlined the specific processes and their meaning for participants, emphasising their continuing rights to withdraw from the project.

Young Participants

To recruit young participants, I sought volunteer gatekeepers (see Gatekeeper Recruitment below) from amongst the Place2Be School Practice Managers (Counsellors). The gatekeepers used contextual and therapeutic knowledge of the young people (or of supervising their therapeutic work) to select participants whom they felt were sufficiently resilient. These young people were introduced to the purposes of the research and asked if they wanted to take part. This *opt-in* process had limitations. This included the possibly of excluding some young people with important opinions who may have wished to be involved and allowing unpredictable selection criteria by gatekeepers. However, this process helped to prevent participation from being too sensitive or harmful for individual young people (Alderson and Morrow, 2011). The use of gatekeepers also helped to reduce any direct pressure for young people to participate from me, as the adult researcher (Morrow, 2005; Cohen et al., 2007). Nominated young people who wanted to participate were given information pamphlets and

¹⁴ See Appendix A: Information for Participants

encouraged to discuss them with their parents/guardians and consent forms to return. The information pamphlets emphasised that participants would be in a group with others who would understand that they have previously used counselling services. It sought to reassure them that they would not need to talk about their counselling. The use of a fictional information sharing vignette as a basis for conversations was aimed at preventing young people from feeling under pressure to talk about their own experiences. I sought to ensure my continuing commitment to my young participants by giving written and verbal information about after care following involvement in the research groups¹⁵. This information/leaflet included the following:

1. Advocating the benefits of talking about difficulties with peers, families and others if taking part in the research brings up sensitive material.
2. Providing follow-up care such as facilitating possible referrals to counselling (via the counselling gatekeeper and the Place2Be) or Drop in Place2Talk service.

I used my therapeutic skills to be sensitive to subtle indications of discomfort from individual young participants during data collection. This extra vigilance resulted in me supporting one young person to leave one group because she was feeling upset because of something that had happened to her earlier that day. Another girl chose not to return to the second meeting because she was worried about missing a lesson just prior to an exam.

Safeguarding and Child Protection

No safeguarding concerns arose for individual young people during the research process. However, the information sheets for young people and carers included information about the limits to anonymity were safeguarding concerns to arise. Were this to have happened, I would have followed safeguarding procedures and shared my concerns with the designated safeguarding leads in the schools concerned. I would have sought to do this in an empathic and transparent way that involved the young person. Obviously, were this situation to have come about it would have been highly pertinent heuristically to this project. Ethically however, I would have removed their data because of its likely sensitivity.

¹⁵ See Appendix A: Information for Participants

Anonymity

All participants in this study were offered anonymity in terms of the research output and their personal information has been kept secure and confidential. All names used are pseudonyms. There were particular challenges in protecting school counsellors' anonymous responses from the Place2Be as an agency especially as my sample size is small. These challenges are further detailed in the sections that follow. This factor was especially pertinent as approaches to information sharing remains a highly charged area that represents a 'tension point' (Flyvbjerg, 2012). I have deliberately included only vague information about the locality of the schools involved. I have also avoided including much background information about individual participants for fear that it will make their contributions discernable at agency level. All participants were also offered (and all the counsellors took up) the opportunity to review transcripts to make corrections and to ensure that information was not included that might identify them. Some participants chose to reveal their participation whilst other counselling interviewees were concerned to protect their identities both in terms of participation and in terms of including identifiable material in their interview transcripts. I strongly believe that the ethics of a research project does not start and finish with the ethics section of a thesis. In this spirit, I continue to refer to ethical concerns as this chapter and thesis progress.

Information Sharing Vignette

As indicated, I constructed a fictional information sharing vignette to be a shared stimulus for professional interviews and young people's group discussions. Vignettes are typically short stories about a fictional scenario set in a concrete context that allow participants to express their views and are considered particularly helpful when exploring sensitive issues (Barter and Reynold, 2004; O'Dell et al., 2012). Vignettes allow participants to discuss an issue in a less personal and therefore less threatening way (Hughes and Huby, 2012). The use of a vignette to prompt discussion was also designed to increase consistency and validity across different stages of my design (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). I aimed to allow SBCs and DSLs to share their views without necessarily revealing details of individual cases to avoid undermining client confidentiality. It is inevitable that responses are internally driven by personal experiences. However, I was concerned that young participants did not feel under pressure to reveal explicit details of their own experiences. I was also influenced by

therapeutic ideas about the power of stories as a natural and accessible method of communicating with young people (Sunderland, 2017). I aimed to create a vignette that was sufficiently worrying as to justify a counsellor overriding a young person's confidentiality, whilst containing content that would not be too disturbing for young participants. The final information sharing vignette was about a girl called Lucy whose mother stays out all night (see, Figure 6). As I could not plan for how individual young people might respond to the scenario, I also showed a copy of the vignette to the counsellor gatekeepers in the schools where the young people's groups were held. This allowed them to use their confidential knowledge of participants' situations to determine individual young people's likely sensitivity to the subject area. The professionals were given the vignette to read during the interviews. To improve accessibility and immediacy for young people it was transposed into a first-person narrative that was read by a young actor on a Powerpoint presentation that formed part of the stimulation for the young people's groups¹⁶.

Figure 6: Information Sharing Vignette

Lucy is 12 years old and she is the oldest in her family. She has recently seemed withdrawn and has fallen behind with her homework. She is also getting into trouble for being late for school and not having the correct uniform and her clothes are dirty. Lucy has a brother Jake (8) and a younger sister Louise (5). They all live with their mum and have very little contact with their dad. Lucy talks about how good she is at getting her brother and sister ready for school in the morning, but it sometimes means she is late for school herself and gets told off. Sometimes she gets worried especially when it's late at night and her mum hasn't come back from the pub. Lucy says she doesn't like her mum drinking she gets scared when her mum is out. Twice mum has not come back until early the next morning. The counsellor shares her concern that Lucy is being left by herself in the house. Lucy gets upset because she is worried her mum will get into trouble.

I accept that interpreting responses from vignettes can be problematic because their hypothetical nature may differ from real-life experience and action (O'Dell et al., 2012). To address this limitation, I also questioned professionals about real-world practice versus ideal practice and obstacles to the latter. Two participants in the professional group (Stage 6)¹⁷ later commented that a more extreme scenario might have provoked greater urgency from

¹⁶ See Appendix B: Data Collection to view a link to this presentation

¹⁷ See diagram page 79

the young people about the fictional girl's situation and perhaps different responses. I partially accept this; however, I note this comment arose in direct response to describing different opinions between young people and professionals. I accept that responses to vignettes are necessarily multi-faceted and multi-intentioned. Such responses cannot be necessarily described as representative of reality especially because they lack the contact with emotions that mark real life events and their associated role in determining decision-making (Spratt, 2001; Nussbaum, 2001). Responses may be driven by associated experiences for individuals but are also open to individual interpretation. However, differing interpretations can also be illuminating and become a potential strength of vignette use (Dell, et al., 2012; Hughes and Huby, 2012). For example, in this research, differing interpretations of the Lucy vignette helped to reveal differing nuanced responses between young people and professionals about how to engage with clients to maintain trust especially around the idea of consent for information sharing.

As a lone PhD researcher, I sought to design an achievable and safe project in an area of great sensitivity involving young people, and the use of the vignette enabled this, whilst allowing all participants to share a joint focus. In professional interviews and young people's groups the vignette became the starting point that evoked further interactive discussion. The use of the vignette also facilitated greater meaningful dialogue between participant/groups in my data analysis and collection and therefore contributed to my stated aim of creating a '*polyphony of voices*' within this study (Flyvbjerg, 2012: 139)

Sampling and Recruitment

My research design required exploring differing perspectives from my participants/groups who might have relevant expertise, case and context knowledge (Dreyfus, 1986; Kinsella, 2010). I sought to recruit school-based counsellors who were relatively experienced both as therapists and within school environments. Within the Place2Be delivery model, School Practice Managers (SPM) were the leading experienced and salaried counsellors in their individual schools. The Place2Be most often requires these practitioners to be accredited/registered by professional bodies such as the BACP. Individual SPM roles varied but mostly included managing the school counselling service, supervising volunteer counsellors, completing individual assessments and providing lunchtime drop-in sessions, providing one-to one counselling and making safeguarding referrals. It is arguable that being

in this role does not necessarily denote specific expertise. However, their responsibility for safeguarding referrals from volunteer counsellors gave this group extra insight.

Initially, I sent out an email via the Place2Be network. Three counsellor participants returned emails to volunteer to take part at this stage. I also presented my research proposal at a national Place2Be secondary counsellor meeting in London, where three other counsellors volunteered. I acknowledge that the use of voluntary sampling may have elicited responses from counsellors who had an interest in this area, which may have influenced my findings. However, the sensitivity of this subject area and my need to protect the anonymity of my participants was my central concern. A dilemma arose for me when members of the senior leadership team at the Place2Be asked me the names of my participants and I had to explain the purposes of research anonymity. In a parallel process with my research theme, this raised the issue of trust between me as researcher, the organisation and my participants. In a discussion with the Place2Be clinical director, I outlined the limits of confidentiality were a safeguarding concern to arise during my fieldwork. She expressed concern that my data may also reveal failures in safeguarding practice by individual counsellors. It was an awkward conversation and it undoubtedly helped that she knew me professionally from our previous roles as tutors on the same course. Through the tension of this delicate negotiation I vicariously experienced some of the anxiety, trust and mistrust later described by some of my interviewees. This incident perhaps illustrates the anxiety that discussing safeguarding practice can generate.

Towards the conclusion of my fieldwork, I considered whether the lack of volunteer counsellors in my research design represented a limitation. To address this, I attempted to recruit some voluntary counsellors but difficulties to do with time availability and one SPM leaving their post interrupted this process. Whilst my initial aim was to 'mine' the expertise of experienced practitioners, I have some regrets about not involving the voices of less experienced volunteer counsellors as this could have illuminated different perspectives. However, it may have also disrupted the ratio of young participants (10) to adult professionals (8). Retrospectively, I believe this balance is central to the contribution of this research.

Piloting

I piloted my professional interviews with a counsellor colleague. She was chosen because of her considerable expertise in working with young people, having previously managed a youth counselling service and currently employed working for a local school counselling agency as a clinical supervisor. This pilot helped me to refine my interview approach and themes. It also helped me to develop a 'warm-up' section of the interview to establish trust in the research relationship prior to introducing the vignette. This also helped me to assess the usefulness of my vignette, which I later amended in response to this feedback.

I was not able to pilot fully the young people's groups in their entirety because of ethical and practical obstacles of composing a group of young people solely for a research pilot. However, I was able to try out the vignette and some of the interview themes with two young people whose parents I knew personally. These young people made some very helpful suggestions about my use of language, particularly in the vignette, and how to make my research theme accessible. For example, they suggested that I needed to start the young people's group by talking about why trust was important in counselling generally and what would make a young person trust a counsellor.

Counsellor Participants

I recruited counsellor participants in secondary schools in a range of socio-economic areas. These locations ranged from areas of socio-economic deprivation (2), to affluent and mixed catchment central city localities (2) and mixed suburban schools (2). They were all state schools, although four English schools were academies run by private companies or trusts. One English school and the school in Scotland remained under local authority governance. I acknowledge that the different cultures, education and legal systems between Scotland and England may influence my findings. All counsellor participants had had previous experience working as a school counsellor, most in other Place2Be schools.¹⁸ They had a variety of theoretical background and modalities (see, Table 2) but overall most described themselves as integrative, followed by the specific modalities that were of key influence on their practice. Most counsellor participants were white British (English or Scottish), one was white Irish, and

¹⁸ I have withheld more precise information about individual school locations for ethical reasons.

one was mixed heritage South African¹⁹. As per the common profile of the counselling profession, five of six were female. I regard this lack of cultural and gender diversity a limitation of my study. Pseudonyms are used to protect their identity and a code e.g. (C1) is included to more clearly determine between individuals and groups of participants in the data analysis. Three counsellor interviewees were later selected for an in-depth narrative analysis of their transcripts following the thematic analysis across all participants²⁰

Table 2: School Counsellor Participants

Name	Sex	Code	Theoretical Modality	Narrative Analysis
Ada	F	C1	Integrative/Psychodynamic	✓
Bethany	F	C2	Integrative/Psychodynamic	✓
Curtis	M	C3	Person Centred/ integrative	
Ellie	F	C4	Integrative- Psychodynamic, Person Centred	
Francis	F	C5	Integrative-Person Centred, Psychodynamic	
Gaby	F	C6	Integrative- Psychodynamic, existential	✓

Designated Safeguarding Lead Recruitment

I originally sought to recruit six matched pairs of counsellors and DSLs, each from one secondary school. This I hoped would provide the best holistic and convergent picture of the school counsellor information sharing processes. Having recruited counsellor participants, I asked them to help me approach the DSL in their school to ask them to participate in the research. Unfortunately, this strategy was only successful in two schools and with two pairs of professionals Daisy (DSL1) and Bethany (C2), and Harriet (DSL2) and Gaby (C6) (see table 3). Both were from white Scottish/English backgrounds. I followed up counsellor approaches with direct communications but received no replies. The problems of recruiting safeguarding leads illuminated difficulties that paralleled those described by counsellor participants. In all

¹⁹ I have avoided listing the ethnicity of participants alongside their pseudonyms and locations as this would likely make them identifiable within the Place2Be.

²⁰ See page 114 for a justification of this selection process.

the schools where safeguarding leads did not participate, the counsellors had expressed a belief that the DSL would be too busy, or that they would have difficulty communicating with them about the research. Some counsellors attributed this to being relatively new in their schools (Ada, C1 and Francis, C5). Others described their experience of their DSL's general unresponsiveness (Curtis, C3). I accept that it is unreasonable to expect DSLs to participate just because their school counsellors have volunteered to take part. Retrospectively, I believe I was experiencing some of the difficulties of communicating with DSLs, that some of my counsellors described. I regret that more DSLs did not take part in this research as this limited the range of their perspectives.

Table 3: Participating Safeguarding Leads

Name	Sex	Code	School Counsellor
Daisy	F	S1	Bethany (C2)
Harriet	F	S2	Gaby (C6)

Stage 1 & 2: Professional Semi-Structured Interviews: Counsellors (n=6) and DSLs (n=2)

I chose a semi-structured interview approach to balance the need to attend to my research questions with the flexibility to respond to the ideas, narratives, sensitivities and needs of the participants (Kvale, 1996; West, 2002). I took a slightly different approach between interviews with counsellors and with DSLs to recognise the differences between their roles and professional backgrounds. For consistency, I gave each professional participant a large format photocopy of an introduction to the research, which I then talked to, and gave them an opportunity to ask questions.²¹ The use of an information sharing vignette was introduced about a quarter of the way through the interview.

I conducted the interviews through a relational approach where I emphasised empathy and openness (Finlay, 2015). Given the anxiety that safeguarding generates, it felt important to develop a sensitive stance that developed trust with my participants (McLeod, 2003). I aimed

²¹ See Appendix B: Data Collection

for the interviews to be regarded as an egalitarian conversation between interested professionals. I authentically chose to declare my insider perspective as a former school counsellor with both groups of professionals (DSLs and SBCs) (Charmaz and Mitchell, 1997). I employed therapeutic skills such as reflective paraphrasing and I worked to establish relational rapport with my participants. This acknowledges my ethical belief that the authenticity of the data I collected relied on the trust that I was able to develop with participants (McLeod, 2003; Noddings, 1984). I agree with Beedell (in Clarke, 2018), who reflects how realness with interview participants conveys a willingness to commit personally and emotionally to the endeavour of the research and this results in rich data. I was aware of a parallel process going on between my need to create a trustworthy relationship with my participants and the trust needed between counsellor and young person. Whilst the above acknowledges the mutual co-construction of the interviews, I also sought to avoid leading my participants to particular answers by using a phenomenological and neutral approach to their responses. I was also mindful of the boundary between engaging participants in open discussion and counselling (McLeod, 2010).

Participants may have chosen to present their practice in a good light. Given the sensitivity about safeguarding this was a potentially potent factor, that may have led participants to adopt protective positions or withhold factors that they believed external audiences may critique (Riessman, 2008; Newby, 2014). I decided not to carry out biographical interviews as I wanted the freedom to be able to prompt, clarify and probe the meanings that my participants were making and explore the specifics of my research question. The semi-structured interview format gave my professional participants opportunity to respond to my interview themes in a flexible and conversational way whilst affording me the opportunity to probe and to excavate beneath responses (Newby, 2014).

I had an interview guide, but not all interviews were experienced in the same way. Differing contexts, locations, rapport with participants, and stage in the fieldwork process inevitably all affected individual interviews. Although, I was intensely interested in all, and I always felt nervous beforehand, some felt comfortable and some felt challenging. In my first interview (Ada, C1) my nerves resulted in me forgetting to turn on my dictaphone until three minutes into the interview meaning I had to backtrack over the opening material. One interview (Bethany, C2) happened in a fieldwork location that had previous traumatic associations for me. I was aware of my own rawness during this interview. The session was marked by both ambivalence and the expression of powerful negative feelings by Bethany. There may have

been a co-current influence of my projections on the data I collected there. However, it does not necessarily follow that this was a negative or skewing impact on the data collection process. My internal rawness may have licensed her sharing of powerful feelings. I used my research journal to reflect on interviews and to consider how I might interpret my experiences to inform my analysis. For illustration, a short example following my interview with Frances (C6) is included below.

I felt unsettled and nervous in this interview. I found it hard to get F. to speak. Was I pushing her too hard? She looked so tired. I felt like she might be weary and weighed down by her role and her office reflected that. She talked about being 'off on the side' (geographically in the school) and the difficulty of communicating with school staff. Like nobody listened to her-like she felt she didn't matter to the school. As the interview went on I felt I was talking too much-like I was trying to fill her silences-taking too much power. It felt like there was a parallel process where I was not only left feeling her downtroddenness but also our difficulty talking may mirror her communication difficulties in the school...where she felt unimportant

Stage 3: Selecting Material for Group Stimulation

Following the interviews with SBCs, I made a video showcasing key responses from adult participants to the information sharing vignette and other relevant comments. This video elicitation method was chosen as an enabling method that was accessible to young people (Thomson, 2009). It allowed young participants to reflect on and respond to the views of the adult professionals. My video used actors to speak participants' words to protect their anonymity.²² I now outline how short excerpts from the interviews with the school counsellors and safeguarding leads were chosen to be the script for this video.

After initial immersion in the transcripts from the interviews with the professionals, a dilemma arose about how the video elicitation method could be both accessible for the young people, and a valid representation of the views of the professionals involved. In order to achieve this, I used a combination of purposive sampling and inductive thematic analysis²³.

My criteria for purposive sampling included the following: -

²² The film actors were volunteers who were mostly counselling students from my previous work at The Faculty of Education in Cambridge. I also elicited the help of personal friends and colleagues.

²³ See Appendix C: Data Analysis for flowchart of this process

1. To be centred on the key/main research theme of trust in relationships with young people. The sample also needed to be focused on the information sharing vignette about the fictional 'Lucy'. This was designed to help make the research theme meaningful for the young participants by contextualizing ideas through the medium of a story they could be imagine and discuss.
2. To be accessible to young participants. This involved considering the language and conceptual ideas involved in sections of transcripts and making judgements about how understandable they would be for younger participants.
3. The sampling also needed to be ethically appropriate. Some sections of transcripts were left out because of concerns that they may have caused upset to young participants, or alternatively prevented them making their own disclosures. This included sections where professionals described negative outcomes for young people who whose information had been shared.

After considering the criteria above, I carried out a thematic analysis selecting the sections of transcript where participants were directly talking about how to maintain trust or about how to work with the fictional Lucy. These sections were then imported into NVivo in order to inductively produce open coding and axial coding (Charmaz, 2006; Newby, 2014). After reflecting on the first round of coding in discussion in supervision, I felt that I needed to have more confidence in the validity of my findings. Influenced by ideas about constant comparative analysis I saved these findings and then started the process again (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). I went back to the original transcripts and made a fresh selection based on the initial criteria. I then repeated the process of inductively open and axial coding which resulted in identifying the following themes: **two minds about sharing (disclosures), choice, transparency, after care, explaining and empathy**.²⁴ The construction of this presentation video was very time-consuming and involved considerable challenges. I am indebted to several people with greater technical knowledge who helped me to produce the film and embed it in a Powerpoint presentation.

²⁴ Thematic grids of selected quotes and my actors film scripts are included in Appendix B. The presentation video I used with the young people can be viewed in Appendix C.

Recruiting Gatekeepers for Young People's Groups

I sought to recruit counsellor gatekeepers in two schools to help nominate young people for the research groups. My ideal was to select gatekeepers from different schools to counsellor participants to protect professional relationships. I sought young people who had had experience of being in school counselling and therefore of limited confidentiality contracts. Initially, I asked the Place2Be to help to nominate possible counsellors who they believed had the capacity to undertake this task. This resulted in three nominations and one counsellor finally volunteered to act as a gatekeeper. After struggling to find a second gatekeeper, I discussed this dilemma with my supervisors. After this consultation, I re-approached one of my counsellor participants. Through Skype discussions we explored how to ensure that counsellor interview material remained anonymous for the young people in her school. These measures included not using direct quotes from this counsellor interview during the film that I produced to showcase the professionals' views. This meant that the group involved did not critique their own counsellor's views. This process resulted in convening two groups; one in Birmingham of four young people age 12-16 and one in Edinburgh of six young people age 11-16 (see table 4 and 5). Most young people recruited were from a white Scottish/English background with one white eastern European young participant. There was also a strong female gender bias. I consider the lack of many boy participants and the largely mono-cultural selection to be a limitation of my study.

Table 4: Edinburgh Young Person's Group

Name	Sex	Code	Age
Sian	F	YP1	14
Kirsty	F	YP2	13
Chelsea	F	YP3	11
Ian	M	YP4	14
Simon	M	YP5	11
Amelia	F	YP6	16

Table 5: Birmingham Young People's Group

Name	Sex	Code	Age
Emma	F	YP7	15
Bella	F	YP8	14
Gemma	F	YP9	13
Toby	M	YP10	14

Stage 4: Young People's Expert Groups

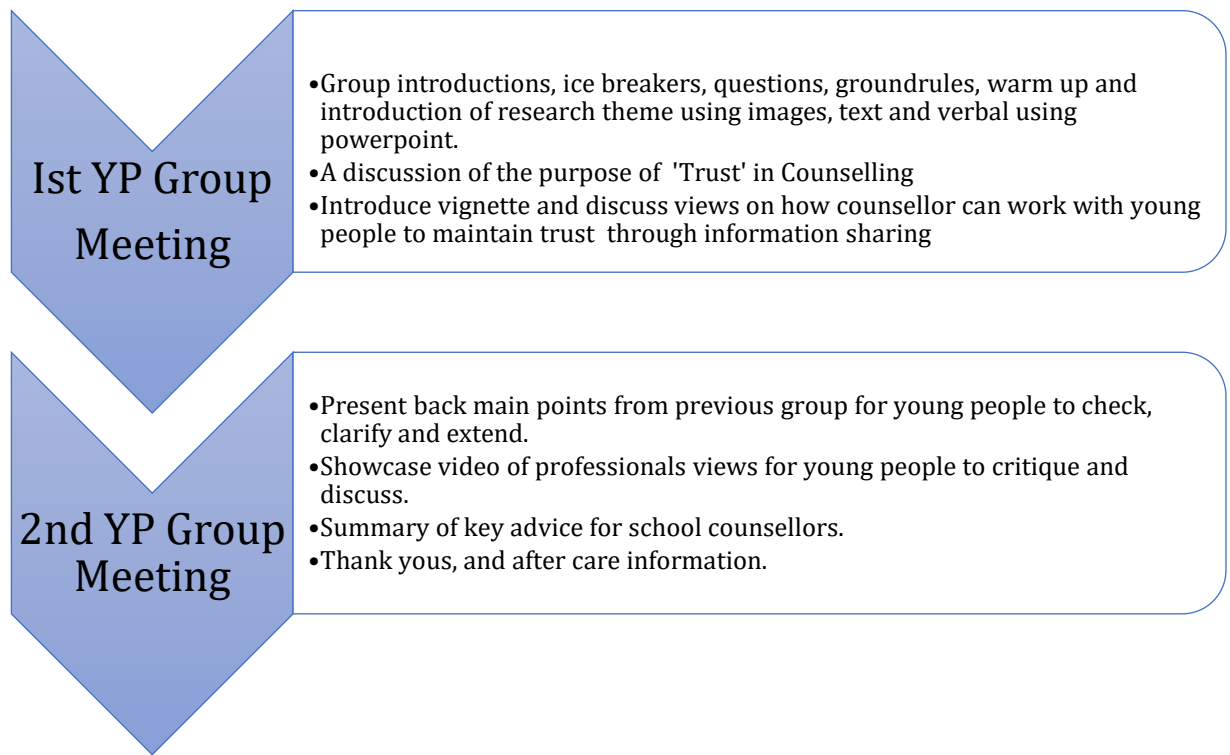
Young participants had all previously attended counselling, and the groups were designed to explore their expertise about trust in school counselling relationships. These groups were run in an interactive, informal and discursive way. This process was designed to offer a less pronounced power differential for young people and be less intimidating than talking one-to-one with a researcher (Heary and Hennessy, 2005; Gibson, 2007; Bagnoli and Clark, 2010).²⁵ I also believe that individual interviews may have prompted greater disclosure of sensitive material. My aim was to create an atmosphere where young participants felt safe and empowered to share their views. I facilitated introductions, and negotiated ground rules with the group, for example, not judging or interrupting others' comments (Gibson, 2007). By using active listening methods, I aimed to adopt a neutral position that emphasized that I was there to learn from group members (Gibbs, 1997; Westergaard, 2009). Influenced by focus group processes, stimulation material was introduced at the beginning to help orientate participants to the research theme (Newby, 2014)²⁶. I encouraged the expression of different viewpoints and facilitated group members to exchange ideas with each other and explain their thinking behind their opinions. To counteract the tendency for individuals to dominate the views expressed, I also sought the opinions of quieter group members by asking participants to write some individual responses on Post-It Notes (Gibson, 2007; Newby, 2014). The groups were audio taped.

Each group met twice. The aim of the first meeting was to establish relationships, introduce the research theme, reflect on the role of trust in counselling and discuss their responses to the information sharing vignette. The second session concentrated on reporting back and allowing the young people to correct the findings from the first group and respond to the video of the professionals' views (see, Figure 7).²⁷ The group sessions closed with me giving information about after care.

²⁶ See Appendix C for a link to the presentation material.

²⁷ A detailed plan for the young people's groups can be found in Appendix B.

Figure 7: Young People's Group Process



I made use of my experiences as a former teacher and therapeutic and youth group facilitator. I was aware of needing to establish trust, a sense of safety and communication in the group quickly if my PhD fieldwork was to be successful (McLeod, 2003). This pressure, combined with working in unfamiliar contexts, meant that, despite wide experience of working with young people, I was very nervous. I expect my participants detected this as I got a sense of them holding back in the early stages. Given greater resources, I would have preferred to have met these groups on one extra occasion to afford greater opportunity to develop trust and communication in the initial stages. I experienced the two groups very differently. The Edinburgh group seemed more confident, vociferous and willing to share opinions whilst the group from Birmingham were initially more reticent and required more encouragement. One member of the Birmingham group was excluded on the day of the second meeting and one other had to leave early because of an earlier upset. Responses to the videos of the professionals' views were not discussed as fully as I had hoped with this group. Despite this setback, both groups engaged reflectively and seemed to share their opinions. Young participants were intrigued by similarities and differences between their ideas and those of the professionals. This gave rise to some nuanced and reflexive debate between group

members, particularly around consent, age of client and the degree of risk facing a young person. The video elicitation seemed a successful strategy in encouraging dialogue between perspectives and discovering dis/connections between the views of participants/groups.

Stage 5: Transcription, Participant Review of Transcripts and Informed Consent

I transcribed all interviews and groups from the audio recordings. In this transcription process, I recorded pauses, hesitations, omissions and tone of voice so that the resulting transcripts were a rich and multi-layered record of the interviews (Braun and Clarke, 2019). Sometimes this required returning to the audio recording of interviews many times. This process was both complex, time-consuming and fascinating. There were many occasions where the young people's groups transcripts required dedicated attention to identify the contribution of individual group members and intended meanings. I was able to check meanings and queries from the first session with the young people directly in the second meeting. The work transcribing my fieldwork immersed me in my data and greatly helped my initial orientation of codes and resulting themes (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In preparation for the narrative stage of analysis, I once again returned to the audio recordings of the selected interviews and added further detail that described how the sections of narrative were spoken, such as the volume and pace of speech and how my contributions may have also structured the conversation (Riessman, 2008). I was also influenced by Gee (1991) which led me to arrange some sections of narrative into stanzas that represented not just how they were spoken but also some of the units of meaning they illustrated. The notations styles I used in the transcription are detailed in Figure 8.

All participants were sent a copy of their transcript/s. The young people were sent hard copies of their group transcript and were offered the opportunity to read them and make any changes or corrections they wanted to. The practical process for this was facilitated by the respective gatekeepers. However, no changes were requested by the young people although corrections were made in the second group meeting.

Figure 8: Transcription Notation

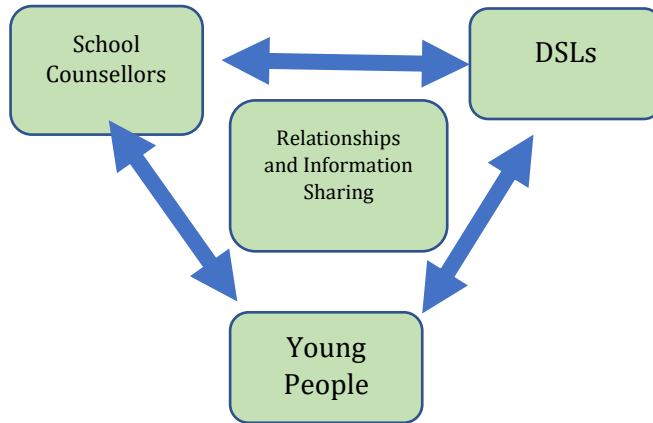
Transcription Notation	
[.]	Just noticeable pause of less than three seconds duration
[...]	Pause of more than 3 seconds duration
[]	Brackets used in text to denote overlapping talk
[T. Yeah]	Researcher speech
-	A cut-off in speech that breaks up the meaning in the line
[laughs]	Participant laughs
[T. laughs]	Researcher laughs
[both laugh]	Participant and Interviewer laugh
[louder]	Participant Volume
[quicker]	Participant speed
[emphasis]	Participant emphasis
[angry]	Participant expression
[inaudible]	Inaudible Speech
.hh	In-breath
hh	Out-breath

Two counsellor participants requested redactions from their transcripts because they were concerned that some details for example, their training made them identifiable within the Place2Be. I had a telephone conversation with one counsellor participant who was considering withdrawing because of her concerns about whether her contributions would make her vulnerable within her organization. However, following redacting some small sections and a further review of the amended transcript she was happy to continue.

The Data Analysis Process

The data analysis process sought to create a '*polyphony of voices*' through an interactive dialogue between the data from different participants/ groups (Flyvbjerg, 2001:139). As per my phronetic stance, my aim was for the final authority of the knowledge to rest with my participants/groups rather than with me as researcher. This process is illustrated in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Participant/group Dialogue through the Data Analysis



Landman (2012) encourages phronetic researchers to apply a multi-layered analysis. This approach to data is intended to provide a holistic and naturalistic engagement with the phenomena of SBC information sharing in this case study (Floresch et al., 2010). I have adapted Landman's ideas to form a differential framework that can be applied to my overall data analysis as illustrated in Figure 10, below. To achieve this multi-layered approach, my data analysis had several stages, including a thematic analysis to consider emerging themes across all participants/groups and a detailed narrative analysis of three counsellors' transcripts. I made use of ideas about phronetic bricolage, discussed in Chapter 4, to apply different methodological lenses to different stages of my analysis (Trnavcevic and Biloslavo, 2017). The details of this process are discussed in the following sections, but the overall structure is outlined in Figure 11.

Figure 10: Levels of Narrative Analysis

Levels of narrative analysis

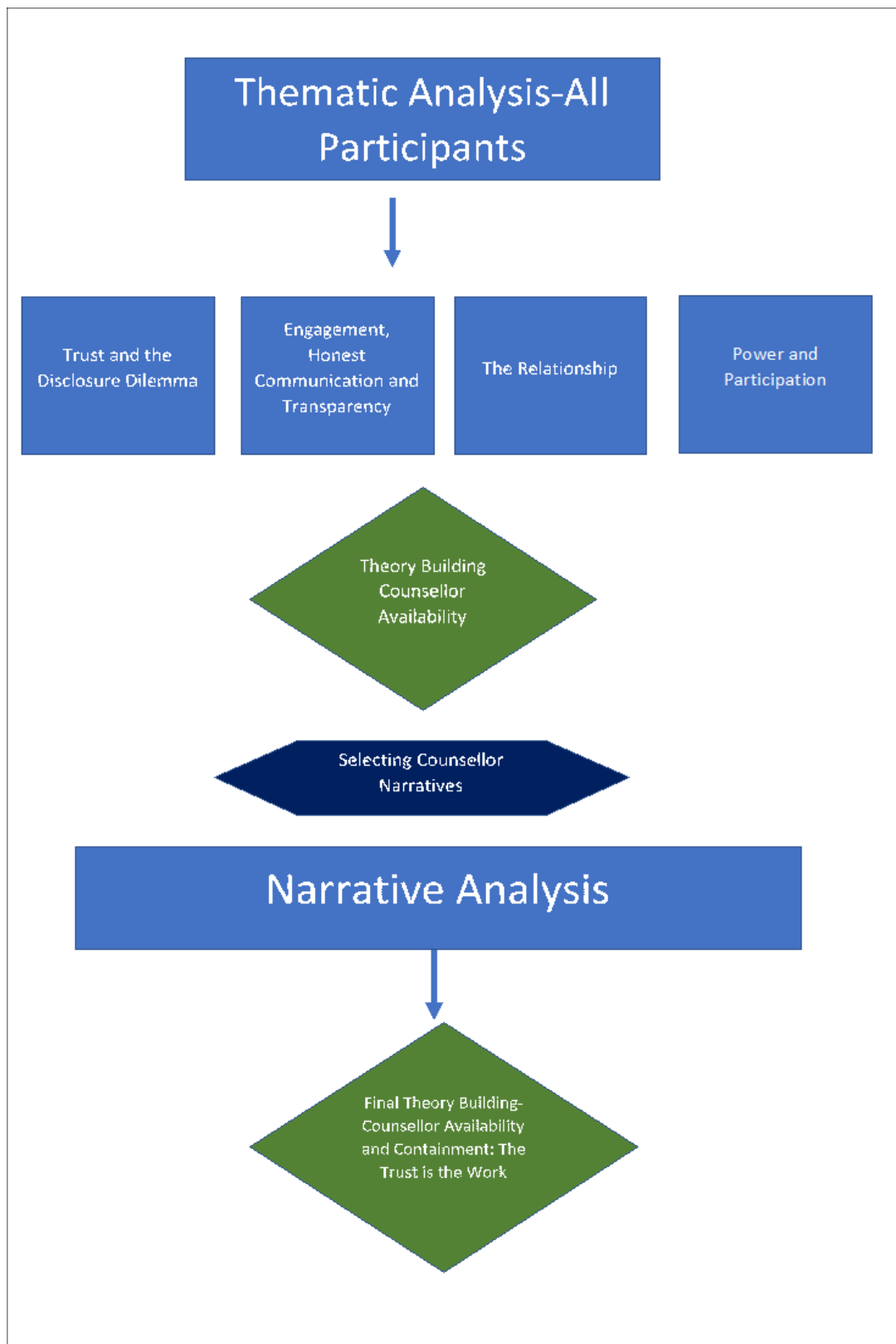
Linear Level the basic structure of the narrative-its sentence formation and its chronology.

Relational Level-the relationships between the participant and other social actors and myself as researcher. This included a focus on the intentions of communications.

Affective Level-the subjective 'felt-sense' of the experiences and stories described and the emotions of the participants and others. This also raised my emotional reactions to the narratives that were described.

The Analytical Level –in which I drew together connections and contrasted narratives themes from different participants as well as making reference to relevant theory and research.

Figure 11: A Flow Chart of the Data Analysis



Thematic Analysis

The thematic analysis aimed to explore themes that arose across different groups of participants. By triangulating these differing viewpoints, I aimed to illuminate areas of agreement and dissonance (Yin, 2009; Braun and Clarke, 2019). Notably, the professionals' views of how to maintain trust in therapeutic alliances through information sharing were compared with the ideas of the young people. The thematic analysis used emergent ideas to develop from the vantage points of all participants/ groups and allowed for a patterned response to complex and divergent data (Floersch, 2010; Braun and Clark, 2019). Wherever possible, I sought to privilege the young people's voices to attempt to offset the structural inequality that exists between adults and younger participants (Alderson, 2007). I adopted Charmaz's (2006) ideas where the resulting codes of individual incidents are linked to the larger whole and to the context of the communications. Although, the main focus of this analysis was content based, I sought to avoid the illusion that this analysis and the meanings therein are 'dropped from the sky' by acknowledging the analysis process (Riessman, 2008:62).

Initially, I immersed myself in the transcripts of my interviews, reading re-reading and listening again to individual interviews/groups (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). From this stage I used a combination of methods to develop initial tags, open and axial codes across my data (see, Figure 12). Firstly, I manually tagged emerging areas of meaning on hard copies of my transcripts using coloured pens. This helped to orientate myself to ideas that were emerging across the data (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). I then started afresh to test out these tags by using NVivo software to re-code systematically all my transcripts (and Post It Notes from young people).²⁸ I supported and double checked this process by using less virtual methods such as organizing segments of meaning into envelopes and then once again returning to my raw audio tapes to double check the units of meaning that were developing. This was a painstaking and iterative process, which involved false starts and dead ends. I agree with Newby's (2014) assertion about the importance of time in this process. Much further time was required to pull the threads of my analysis together to form over-arching themes. This again, was an iterative

²⁸ Examples of coded transcripts can be found in Appendix C.

and creative process with many re-classifications along the way. In a process of confirmation, these themes were discussed at supervision and with peers before reordering and refining. I aimed to construct a set of themes that were stretched out enough to elucidate how counsellors and young people navigated relationships through information sharing whilst acknowledging the many overlapping concepts that emerged. I readily acknowledge the tension in separating out ideas, which are so tightly and inter-connected (see, Figure 12). Although, themes primarily emerged inductively from the patterns of meanings in my data they were also influenced by my relational and phronetic stance (Charmaz, 2006; Riessman, 2008). I acknowledge my role in the art of the interpretation process, which includes the application of my own phronesis, in formulating, re-ordering and honing these themes (Landman, 2012).

Figure 12: The Process of organising Codes, Subthemes and Main Themes

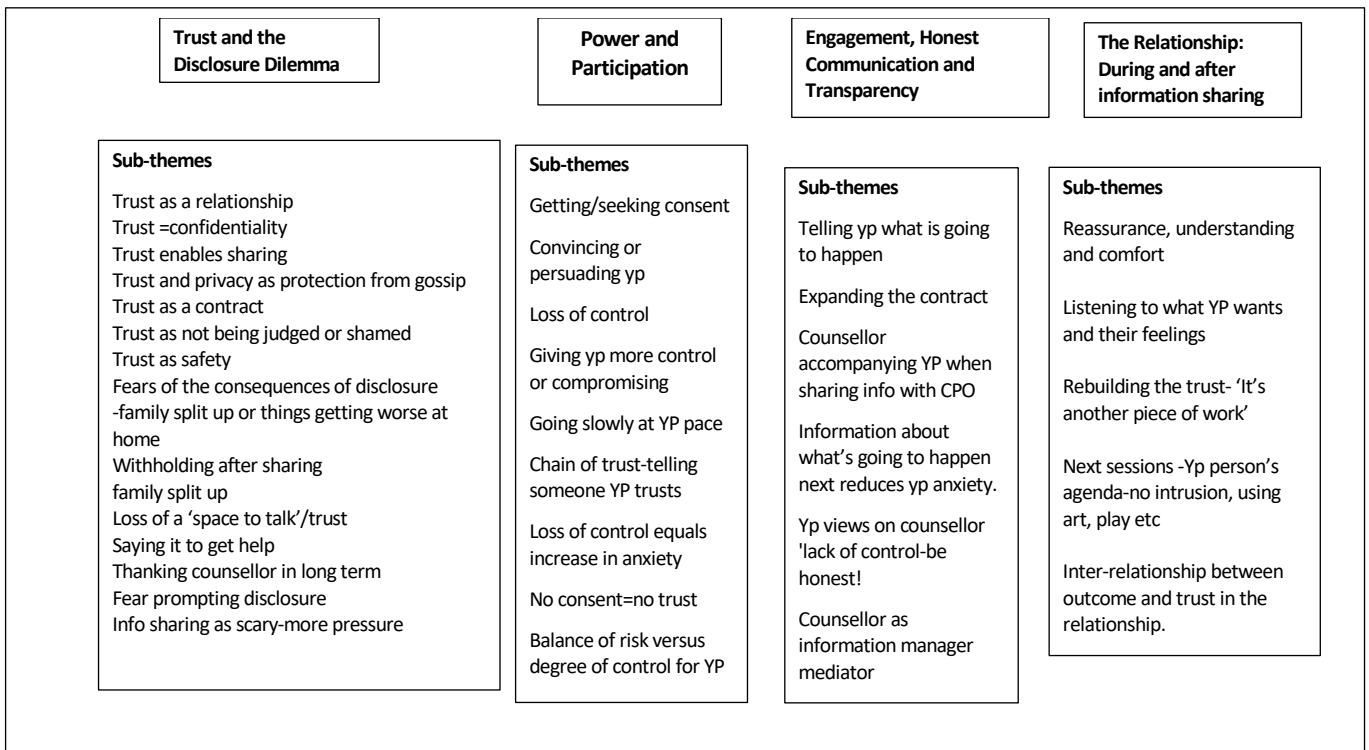
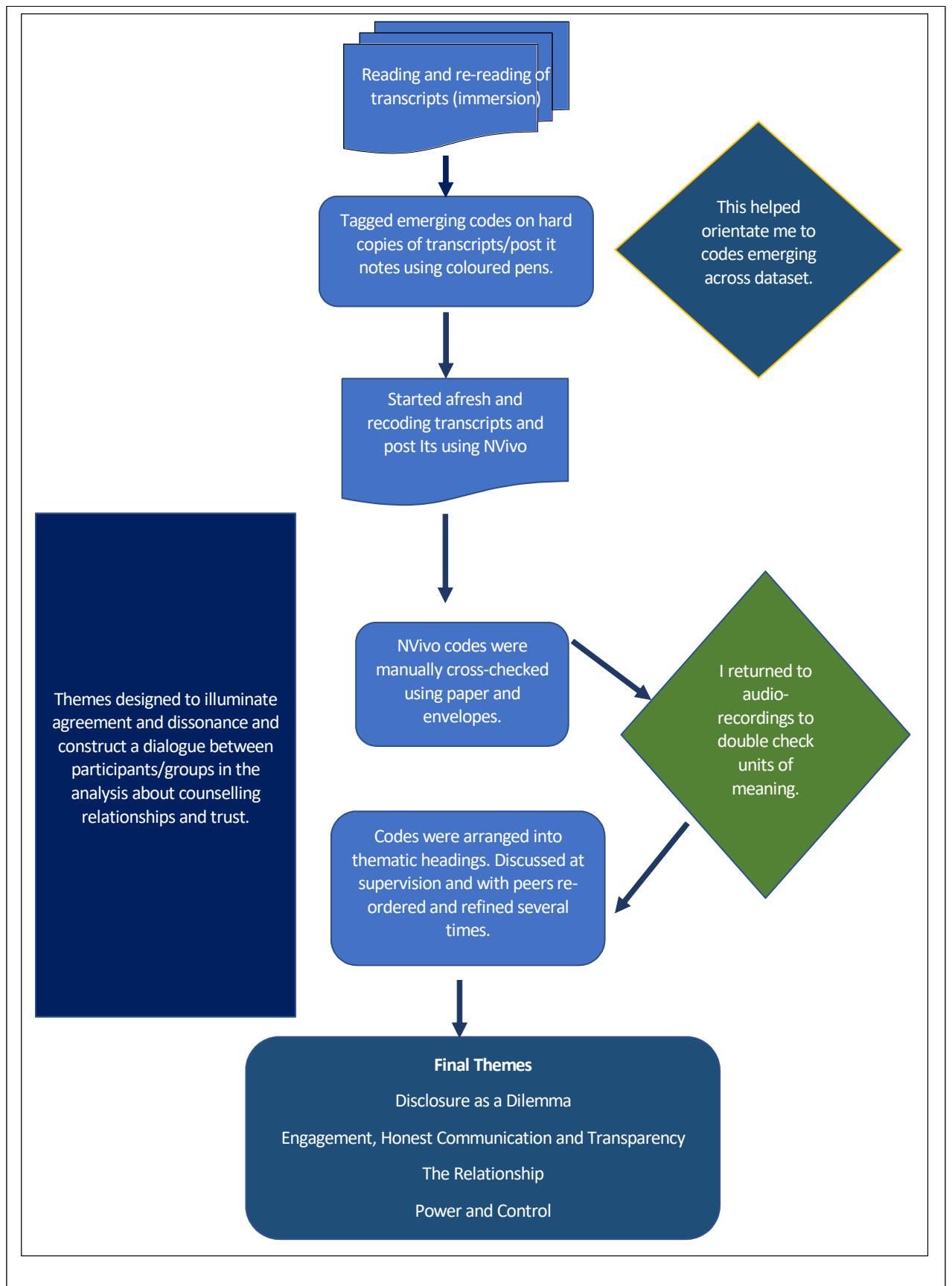


Figure 13: Flow Diagram of the Thematic Analysis Process



Stage 6: Professionals' Group

Following the thematic analysis, participating school counsellors and DSLs were invited to a further group to co-reflect on the meanings in the data. Only three participating counsellors attended this group, Ada (C1), Bethany (C2) and Gaby (C6).²⁹ Ada was taken ill during the group and was unable to meaningfully contribute. It was disappointing that no safeguarding lead attended. This could have been a valuable opportunity for sharing practice experience in this area (Lefevre et al., 2013). This perhaps acknowledges that interest in this research was centred on relationships between young people and school counsellors but also parallels the data collected about the very high demands on, and sometimes difficulty communicating with, safeguarding leads. At a later point, I met counsellor participant Frances (C5) and her ideas and responses were incorporated into my findings.

These professional participants were encouraged to consider themselves an expert group who can help make sense of the data collected. The counsellors responded reflectively to anonymous statements made by the DSLs and the young people's groups. They also responded to young people's reactions to the video of the professionals' views. The lively discussion that resulted raised several practice dilemmas. The contextual obstacles to ideal practice in individual schools were raised. Participants also responded to areas of dissonance between young peoples' and professionals' views. The meeting was audio taped and my reflection on this data further developed my ideas and contributed to my analysis and theory building.

Theory Building

The findings of my thematic analysis led to a period of tentative theory building. I realized that much of the material from my thematic analysis was concerned with the answers to my first three research questions, a reminder of which are listed below:

- 1. How do young people and school-based counsellors navigate relationships in the context of safeguarding information sharing?**

²⁹ By this stage of the fieldwork timeline, Curtis (C3) and Ellie (C4) had left the Place2Be and Daisy (DSL1) had also left her post.

- 2. What are the implications for maintaining trust in working alliances with young people?**
- 3. What processes support trust in relationships with young people?**

Following the thematic analysis, further layers of analysis seemed necessary to attend to my last two research questions (below) and to utilize fully the different layers of analysis as advocated by Landman (2012).

- 4. What factors facilitate, or impede school counsellors' ability to maintain working alliances with young people through information sharing processes?**
- 5. How do the dis/connections between the practical wisdom of young people and professionals (SBCs and DSLs) contribute to school counselling practice knowledge in this area?**

The professionals' group led me to re-consider the affective and contextual influences on SBC information sharing practice. On re-reading my thematic data and applying a subsidiary layer of analysis that focused exclusively on the feeling content of the data, such as coding for emotional phrases and using NVivo to isolate individual words associated with feelings powerful negative emotions associated with information sharing became more apparent in my themes³⁰. There was also pronounced focus in my school counsellor interview data on the impact of professional relationships with DSLs, which was not sufficiently excavated through taking a thematic approach. My relational background caused me to reflect on literature about the role of containment in anxiety management and professional decision-making in areas such as safeguarding (Bion, 1970; Turney and Ruch, 2016). This led me to consider how professional relationships with DSL may be influencing the affective experience for school counsellors. Do these relationships heighten or lower their anxiety? What might my interviews reveal about how this factor indirectly facilitates/obstructs school counsellors' ability to navigate relationships with young people and maintain working alliances? To fully explore research question four (RQ4) I therefore selected to analyse the narratives of individual counsellors to explore the affective and relational context of information sharing.

³⁰ See Appendix C

Finally, research question five (RQ5) required me to separately spend time analysing the ability of the participant groups to bring contextual expertise to this area, as evidenced through the whole data analysis process.

A Narrative Analysis

Flyvbjerg (2001) suggests that phronetic social science should seek to understand social phenomena by discovering and relating narratives. I agree that human beings naturally make sense of experiences through the visceral immediacy of stories (Bruner, 1990). However, this project takes a phronetic bricolage (Trnavcevic and Biloslavo, 2017) approach so that the second level of analysis, whilst mainly influenced by narrative analysis, also contained elements of psychosocial ideas about what may be unconsciously commuted in the data (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000; Clarke and Hoggett, 2008). Each of these influences brought layers of meaning to add to the depth of the analysis. To support this process, I made use of my reflective journal and my psychotherapeutic skills.

The narrative analysis aimed to illuminate the dialogical, intentioned and emotional contexts to information sharing (Riessman, 2008). The application of psychosocial ideas allowed me to further look beneath narratives and consider what was communicated unconsciously within my data, for example by non-verbal factors such as tone of voice, pace, volume, exclamations, hesitations and omissions (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000; Clarke and Hoggett, 2008). I applied my pre-existing therapeutic knowledge, phronesis and skills. It also allowed me to make use of concepts such as containment and transference to reflect on what might be happening both in the interview and in reported encounters (Bion, 1970; Clarkson, 2004). I re-read transcripts many times and re-annotated them. I also returned to the audio recordings to add further detail to the selected transcripts, such as hesitations, breaths and tone of voice, or emotional exclamations such as laughs, or raised or lowered voice for example. I also referred to my research journal to consider my own subjective experiences of interviews, and how that might be contributing to the co-construction of meanings. This process included referring to the raw audio recordings to present sections of interview transcripts in ways that conveyed meanings evident in recordings that went beyond just the words used. This included setting

out lines to convey the pace of speaking and the use of breath or breathlessness³¹. I also sought to consider how to maintain the authenticity, coherence and meanings of individual participants, whilst acknowledging the evaluative nature of the level of analysis I was applying (McLeod, 2003).

The narratives in my data were saturated with feelings. They also came loaded with experiences of power (Speedy, 2009). In considering them, I considered the agency of participants allowing them to be human beings with consciousness and intent, which caused me to question the relational purposes of the stories/accounts (Mishler, 1986, Riessman, 2008). Why was this story being told to me at this time and in this interview and in this way and in this sequence? What was the teller hoping to accomplish by telling, what are they avoiding and what are the inconsistencies and contradictions? I considered how I was co-constructing the data, how communications were performed by reflecting on characterization to consider how participants were portraying themselves at different points as victims or heroes, for example (Goffman, 1969; Bruner, 1987; Mishler, 1986). Following this narrative analysis, I took forward my findings to engage in further refining of my theory of counsellor availability through information sharing.

Selecting the Narratives

I chose to focus on the experience of the school counsellors to capture the relational, affective and systemic contexts that dis/allow individual counsellors to work to support trust in alliances. In this, I was led by my inductive data analysis and theory building process.³² The in-depth approach described above was very time-consuming and therefore required a small sample that meant that I needed to select from amongst my professional participants. I focused on the counsellors, as they are the professionals whose relationships with young people form the nucleus of this study. Despite this, I was initially tempted to include Daisy's

³¹ See Appendix C

³² I had personal ethical misgivings about applying the level of scrutiny described above to data from my young people. Counsellors would have greater understanding of this level of analysis because of their training and therapeutic practice. However, I was concerned about the power differential between myself as interpreting adult researcher and the young participants were I to have used this approach with the young people's material.

(DSL 1) account as it was very rich. However, its content took my analysis outside my central research questions.

In considering which of my counsellor narratives to select, I was concerned to capture a range of contextual experiences in schools especially in terms of professional relationships. I finally selected the two counsellors (Bethany C2 and Gaby C6) whose DSLs (Daisy DSL 1, Harriet, DSL2) took part in the study, as their experiences and priorities were very different. The inclusion of these two narratives meant that whilst standing as coherent individual accounts, their data could be cross-referenced against dyadic perspectives. I also chose Ada (C1) because her communicative difficulties with her DSL was a feature of her narrative. These three counsellors best represented the range of experiences described by my counsellor participants. My choices are broadly characterized by selecting an established and communicative relationship with the DSL in the School (Gaby), a functioning but insecure relationship (Bethany) and an unestablished and uncommunicative relationship (Ada). The experiences of the counsellors who were not selected - Curtis (C3), Ellie (C4) and Frances (C5) whilst individual, are positioned within this range.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described my iterative research design and how through my data collection and analysis, I have sought to create interactive dialogue between my participants/groups to reveal their corporate and individual phronesis (Flyvbjerg, 2001). I have highlighted the ethical sensitivity of exploring issues of confidentiality, information sharing and safeguarding. This influenced my decision to use a fictional informational vignette to support overall coherence to this case study, encourage dialogue within the data and prevent participants from feeling pressured to reveal personal experiences. I outlined my reflexive stance involving transparency about my pre-conceptions and dilemmas in order to strengthen the trustworthiness of the project. I have used interactive methods, including a video of 'professionals' opinions, to highlight the insights and critiques of practice by young participants and make the project accessible to them. To produce the thematic and narrative analysis findings chapters that follow, I have employed phronetic bricolage to engage with my data in multi-layered ways, affective, dialogic, analytical and adopt a variety of methodological lenses (Trnavcevic and Biloslavo, 2017; Landman, 2012). In doing so, I have attempted to

capture a holistic, human and relational case study of school counsellor information sharing at the Place2Be.

Chapter 6: Findings from the Thematic Analysis

Introduction

This chapter explores those themes that arose across and between the participants/groups in this case study. At this stage, my primary focus was to analyse the content of data. However, to respect the authenticity and coherence of the material, where possible I illuminated the manner and context of communication (Riessman, 2008). In Chapter 5, I outlined the process of open and axial coding involved constant comparative analysis to formulate the respective thematic categories (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Braun and Clarke et al., 2019). Emerging commonalities were then amalgamated between categories into four overarching themes

- 1. Trust and the disclosure dilemma.**
- 2. Engagement, honest communication and transparency.**
- 3. The relationship.**
- 4. Power and participation.**

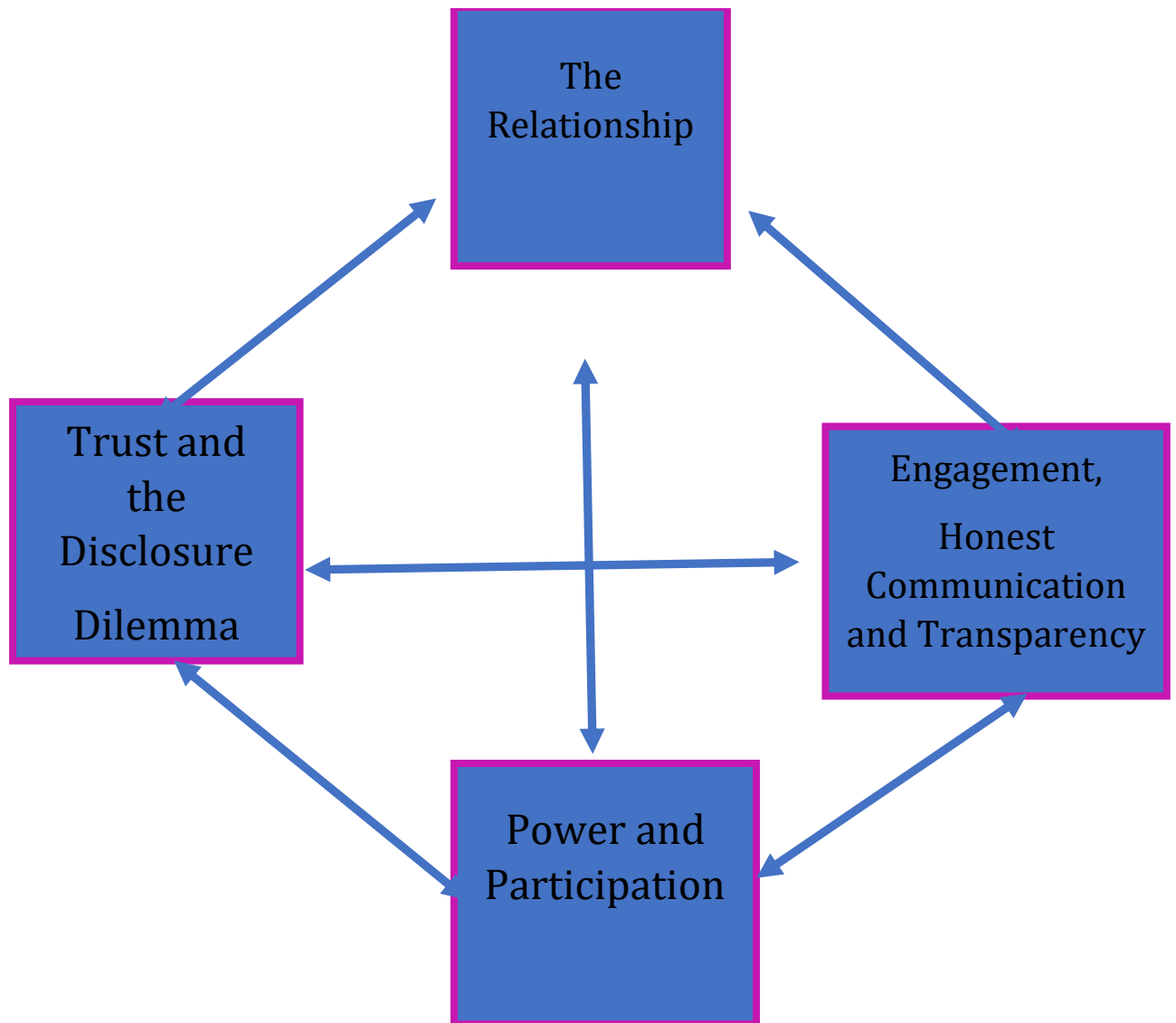
The findings were a complex web of interconnected ideas. There were many overlaps and connections between my themes and therefore tension in separating out ideas that were tightly interconnected, as illustrated in Figure 13. Contextual research is necessarily ‘messy’, especially if it is going to address professional decision-making processes and real-world practice (Newby, 2014; Smit and Derksen, 2017). Where practical, I have reported the young people’s views and those of the professionals alongside each other within the same section, to best illuminate the dis/connections that arose. My intention was to set up a dialogue between the views of the young people and the professionals whilst also acknowledging differing opinions within each group (Flyvbjerg, 2012). This structure was designed to best illuminate young people’s direct responses to the film showcasing the professionals’ views. Sub-themes that were particular to a specific group were dealt with separately, as they emerged.

Towards the end of this chapter, I have reflected on my findings and reviewed the thematic data to consider the affective experience of information sharing. These experiences inevitably form part of the dynamic context to practice and will be further explored in Chapter 7. This chapter concludes with an initial stage of theory building where I propose that for the

participants, trust in alliances is supported by continued counsellor availability through information sharing.

The word 'professionals' denotes the inclusion of both designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) and school-based counsellors (SBCs) in specific analysis. Otherwise, different participant groups are named individually.

Figure 14: Interconnections between Themes



Trust and the Disclosure Dilemma

Trust

I began by exploring the young people's formulations about trust and their perceptions of the role it plays in counselling alliances. As trust lies at the heart of young people's decisions to disclose troubling material, these formulations represented the prologue to my thematic data (Cossar et al., 2014; Berelowitz et al. 2013; Lefevre et al., 2017). To explore my central research theme, it was necessary to understand what was meant by trust for the young participants, and what they see as its value in counselling.

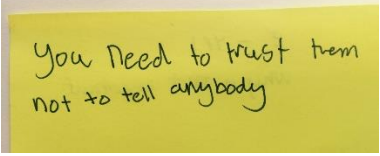
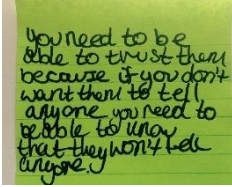
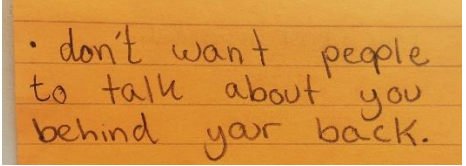
At the beginning of the young people's group sessions I initiated a discussion about the role of trust in counselling relationships. There was not an equivalent interview theme with the counsellor participants, as I surmised that their training and experience would have included previous reflection on this area. However, my recruitment presentation to the national group of secondary school counsellors at the Place2Be started with a conversation about the role of trust in counselling work. All the counsellors who later took part in the research attended this presentation and made contributions to the discussions. The group consensus described trust as the bedrock of the therapeutic alliance. The counsellors viewed trust as healing of itself as well as necessary for other elements of the counselling work, such as the sharing of painful material. These ideas were succinctly summarised in this session by my participant Frances (C5) as **'The trust is the work'** which I later chose (with her permission) as the title of this research.

All the young people who took part in the research were clear that trust enabled them to disclose sensitive material in counselling. This corresponds to pre-existing child protection research that recognizes the facilitating role of trusting relationships with professionals to support young people to share their concerns (Jobe and Gorin, 2013; Cossar et al, 2014). This process is best illustrated by Ian (YP3) who asserted *'no trust=no sharing'*. For the young people, trust seemed to be experienced as a multi-dimensional on-going dynamic where mistrust in relationships may be the starting position for some.

Sian (YP1) But how can I know if I can trust the person or not? — I won't be able to say anything...

The word trust was used 35 times in responses from young people. Whilst acknowledging the influence of my research focus, trust seemed to independently emerge as a dominant theme. Individuals within the young people's groups returned many times unprompted to the ideas around the importance of maintaining trust. It was continually linked to a feeling of safety in the relationship with their counsellor. Such trust was strongly interconnected with confidentiality. When asked at the beginning of the group sessions about why trust might be important, they talked about the counsellor not telling anyone else unless the client wanted it to be passed on '*because it's personal information*' or because '*It's private*'. These ideas are summarised below showing both written and spoken responses. There seemed unanimous agreement on this across both groups (Edinburgh and Birmingham), with more references to trust, meaning '*confidentiality*' than any other definition. The perceived privacy of the counselling relationship was contrasted with other relationships at school, such as with teachers and other young people, where there was a belief that personal information gets talked about '*behind their backs*'. Most young people valued counselling as protected private space and a refuge from peer 'gossip'. This resonates with previous studies, which have suggested that an expectation of confidentiality is attractive for young people (Fox & Butler, 2007; Chan and Quinn, 2012).

Table 6: Young People's Views on Trust and Confidentiality

		
<p><i>Emma (Y7): It's private because—say it wasn't private—you wouldn't want it to go round school. Your business and what's happened to you and how you feel.</i></p>	<p><i>Toby (Y10): You do know that you can speak to someone who can keep it secret.</i></p>	<p><i>Gemma (Y9): Because say if you told them something personal going on and you didn't want anyone else to know. Then you can trust your counsellor to like not tell like teachers in school or tell your parents at home.</i></p>

This resonated with ideas found in studies such as Baylis (2011) and Prior (2012) which suggest that a prime function of confidentiality for young people is to lessen the shame and exposure they might potentially experience by disclosing sensitive or personal material. Prior (2012) also suggests that young people often hold back from sharing difficult material whilst assessing the counsellor's trustworthiness. This accords with the views which were expressed in the Edinburgh group.

Tracey: What would happen if there wasn't trust? If you went to a counsellor and you didn't trust her or him.

Ian (YP4): You wouldn't want to tell them anything

Kirsty (YP2): Be an awkward silence—well [...] erm if it's the first time and you are not able to trust them — I won't be able to say anything...

The young people saw trust as a necessary precursor for sharing personal information. They suggested that a lack of trust would cause them to be silent, even if there were things that they would like to share, and it would be embarrassing.

Trust was also strongly associated with relational safety.

Bella (YP8): It makes you feel like safe. Coz then if you feel safe [laugh] then like then you'd be able to say what—like how you feel a whole lot easier.

The role of confidentiality in the young people's formulation of trust has considerable implications for information sharing practices within school counselling. The perception that information may not be treated as confidential may undermine young people's willingness to attend counselling or create relationships where they would share their real concerns. It would suggest that both in terms of safety and counselling outcomes, the stakes are high when it comes to information sharing practices and young people's perception of them. Previous studies that have suggested that a fear that counselling may not in fact be confidential, would be the main reason why young people may choose not to access counselling services (Chan and Quinnn's, 2012). Young people who have experienced abuse, for example, may have encountered a potent mix of family narratives and internalised shame and blame that may have left them with a sense of wrong-doing potentially contributing to them having withheld

their worries (McElvaney, 2015). This could be compounded by the fear of things getting worse, or that the perpetrator will find out, especially if they have had little reason to trust adults in the past.³³ What is impossible to illuminate is what part the fear that material shared will be passed on, has on young people disclosing their real concerns in school counselling. However, what does seem likely from the responses in this study is that the perceived privacy of the counselling enabled the sharing of difficult material, even if the young person was unconsciously seeking intervention and help outside of the sessions. Hence, there seemed a highly complex interrelationship between perceptions of privacy, disclosures of risk and help-seeking (McElvaney, 2015).

Trust was also formulated by most young people as a relationship. The young participants emphasised that trust takes time to develop and that they would need to get to know their counsellor before sharing difficult information.

Edinburgh Group.

Tracey: What would make you trust a counsellor?

Sian (YP1): Getting to know them.

Birmingham Group.

T: What would get you to trust them? What could they do?

Gemma (YP9): Like trust exercises— like do a few trust exercises before [yeah].... Get to know them a little bit and form a bond where you can trust them.

Emma went on to explore the consequences of not trusting a counsellor. She described how young people may 'bottle up' their feelings and concerns leaving them feeling worse. Her solution was to ensure that clients developed a good bond with counsellors so that they could express their worries in a cathartic way.

Birmingham Group.

Emma (YP7): Because if there's not—if you don't have trust with the counsellor then you are gonna—it's gonna make you feel worse— because you are not gonna—say the

³³ This aspect will be further explored the following section on Power and Participation.

*things you want to say and to get help with... you are gonna button it more... you are going to get stressed out that you can't talk to your counsellor. So it's always good for the first couple of sessions to always [...] **get that bond first** (my emphasis).*

This links with other social work research, such as studies by Hallet (2015) and Lefevre et al. (2017) highlighting the value of ongoing trusting relationships with professionals, noting that disclosure may be an ongoing relational process. Although, trust was seen as being continually assessed and kept back in balance, some young people talked about being initially angry with counsellors but, later, regaining trust.

Emma (YP7). But in the long term she will thank the counsellor and say 'thank you even if I didn't like it at the time—thank you because I knew you were trying to help me not be stressed and everything' ...

Equally, the young people were also clear that trust could be broken, for example by failure to consult or listen to their views.

Ian (YP4). That would make people not want to say anything because you'd know if you say anything that means you're in danger she's going to go tell someone straight away. Which will mean right from the start that there is no trust whatsoever.

Most young people in my study suggested that once trust was established, they might be more tolerant of actions by the counsellor about which they might initially be uncomfortable, such as information sharing. This was the Edinburgh group's response to the video of a counsellors' views:

Sian (YP1). She understands! Err... she said about someone who was really angry and then came back that's showing that there is still some trust there. Even if they are angry- they still feel like they can go and tell that person that they are angry.

Kirsty (YP 2). That means you have done something good.... In like the sessions and that.

This also served to emphasise the longitudinal trajectory of trust in the bond with young people and how this may have supported the ongoing resilience of the counselling relationship (Bond, 2009).

'You Don't Know if it Would be Worse Than it was Before': Disclosure as a Dilemma

All participant groups in this study agreed that disclosure is a considerable dilemma and that young people are often ‘in two minds’ (Ellie C4)’ about sharing. All young people and most professionals emphasised the anxiety that accompanies uncertainty about the consequences of disclosure, a finding that accords with other studies (Featherstone & Evans 2004; Ungar et al. 2009; Jobe and Gorin, 2013). Disclosure was perceived as highly risky with young people asserting that they were making themselves vulnerable. There were strong narratives around the fear of ‘*getting taken away from your mum and families split up*’. Young participants emphasised how young people did not know whether their situation would get better or worse.

Ian (YP4): You don’t know if the change it will benefit you in anyway—if it would end up being worse than it was before.

Sian (YP1): You wouldn’t want the children to lose their mum because if that happens then the tiny—the younger children could get separated if they don’t have any other family...

Simon (YP5): I just think like if social work came to her house one day —we need to take your daughter— she’d be like what have I done...

Previous research has described as complex processes associated with disclosure and failure to disclose abuse. Young people may fear family or other reactions to disclosures, being blamed, not being believed or viewed as disloyal, or losing control of the consequences (Featherstone and Evans, 2004; Cossar et al, 2014; Linell, 2017). All participant groups described how disclosures were sometimes made unintentionally, when young people were scared, or where they saw their experiences as normal but, then became shocked and fearful of the chain of events that was initiated.

Bella (Y8): I think sometimes when people are scared... they say whatever is on their mind. Like [...] sometimes I think she might not have thought about what she said, but it might have slipped out by accident because she was scared. So then that then creates its own domino effect because that’s happened [...] now this happens—it’s going to carry on like that...

Professional participants also emphasised that disclosures might be prompted by an unconscious desire for practical help as highlighted by previous child protection literature (McElvaney, 2014; Anderson, 2016).

Ellie (C4): And I do believe that children know when they disclose (.) on some level they know what will happen. And they do it because they want (.) help...

Gaby (C6) personified the accidental disclosure process as something animate.

Gaby (C6): But the ones where a young person does get upset it feels horrible errm [.] Yeah because that wasn't what they intended even by sharing it with you and something has grown arms and legs and they haven't seen that happening.

She described the sense of horror when clients reveal something without realising the implications and then get upset about information sharing.

This contrasted with most young people who placed greater emphasis on an active decision-making process. Participants pointed to factors such as whether parents were aware of the material being discussed and how these factors impacted on how clients felt about the idea of information being passed on. Most young people highlighted that reactions to information being shared may be a function of original intentions in making the disclosure.

Counsellor

Frances (C5): And how has that gone down— it really depends upon the student I think. I have had a student walking out the room when I said I needed to share err— I have had others who have been fine...— it very much depends upon the young persons' relationship with their parents—...but if they are a young person who doesn't share with mum or it's something they can't share with mum— then that teacher's going to be on the phone to mum [.] is scary.

Young People.

Gemma (YP9): I think it depends like—if Lucy is like—if Lucy is saying it to ask for help like either way the counsellor should still tell someone about it. But if Lucy wants it to go (to safeguarding) then it will be fine and it will get sorted. But if she doesn't, then it might put more pressure on Lucy because she might get scared to see what is going to happen...

Most young participants asserted that if clients were unhappy with the help they received or with information being passed on this would likely prevent disclosure of further concerns.

Chelsea (YP3): Say if a counsellor had shared what Lucy had said to her. But then from now on Lucy may not say the serious things that are going on with her— just in case she shares it again.

Toby: I think the same thing. If she—if your counsellor tells the safeguarding people information err... it puts you—you are a bit more anxious telling your counsellor anything new consequently.

Equally, most professionals described young people, as testing them and their responses to lower level disclosures, before sharing their central concern.

Most young people and four counsellors suggested that the sharing of information against the client's wishes would erode the counselling space. Young people described how the freedom to offload is lost when information is passed on. They also highlighted how this might lead to the retraction of disclosures, or the withholding of further concerns.

Sian (YP1): It (information sharing) will probably stop her from talking—she'll maybe will end up denying everything.

Some young people valued the confidentiality of the counselling above **all** and its relationship to being able to offload their worries in what they perceived as safe spaces. This echoed Daniels and Jenkins (2010) argument for the value of absolute confidentiality in supporting autonomy, facilitating further disclosures and helping young people to feel more in control of the pace of any subsequent safeguarding referrals.

Having explored how disclosures can be perceived by young people, as beset with uncertainty and potentially scary consequences, I now turn to the participants' views of how counsellors can maintain trust through information sharing processes.

Engagement, Honest Communication and Transparency

All counsellors, young people and one of the safeguarding leads talked about how honest and transparent communication and ongoing active engagement promoted trust with young people. This engagement had several elements that were articulated differently by young people and professionals, but it was an area where there was significant overall agreement.

Talk to her! The Importance of Engagement, Explanation and Reframing

School counsellors, young people and one DSL perceived an active engagement process as vital to maintaining alliances through these experiences. This included explaining clearly why they were concerned and why they felt they needed to pass on information. In response to the fictional vignette, Curtis' imagined reply (to Lucy) is typical.

Curtis (C3): I would say "I understand you are worried about your mum getting into trouble, but [...] but we have to look at your safety first. Because you're the one working with. And our concern is you being kept safe..."

All counsellors emphasised that this process should ideally happen, then and there in the counselling session. The timing of disclosures is significant as there is more time to discuss and explain the concern if the disclosure had happened towards the beginning of a session. Three of the counsellors talked about the difficulty of identifying safeguarding risk within a session itself, where there may have been a great deal of complex dynamic material for the counsellor to process. Some counsellors suggested that identifying a safeguarding concern would get easier with increased experience of working with young people and highlighted how the volunteer counsellors may initially struggle with this aspect. For example, Bethany suggested that some inexperienced counsellors might go into denial about the dangers for young people.

Bethany (C2): Even if they didn't spot it at all they do want to acknowledge what can happen next for whatever reason... maybe fear around how the client is going to react. I think a lot of the counsellors are very fearful of breaking their contracts and don't really want to know—maybe its denial.

Whatever the reason for not initially raising the concern, it would be necessary later to communicate the perceived need to share their information. This role would usually fall to the School Practice Managers themselves, as the salaried counsellors, who would then recall the young person from class to explain it to them. Some commented that this is not ideal, as it would be a dilution of the relationship the young person has with their counsellor, and it could feel like an intrusion. All counsellor participants agreed that their priority would be to avoid passing on information without first talking to the young person concerned because of the potential to rupture trustful alliances. All professional participants regarded it as ideally best for the on-going alliance if this communication happened within sessions conducted by

the young person's own counsellor. However, all counsellors described structural obstacles to this practice. These included differences between the role, responsibilities and working conditions between volunteer and paid counsellors (SPMs).

'Un-normalization'

The process of explaining about a safeguarding concern might include some re-framing of experiences. This was described by Gaby (C6) as 'un-normalization'. Gaby and others have suggested how the counsellor may need to explore and articulate how the young people's situation is 'not ok' or risky for that client.

Gaby (C6): errr...being really clear that 'there are some things that we can't keep private for you and there might be some things that actually you need some help with— that situation is not okay— and it might be quite normal for you, and it might not seem like a big deal but actually that sounds like that's quite hard and adults might be able to help you with that....' It's kind of the opposite to normalising I suppose [laughs] it's kind of saying "it's not something that you have to just accept

This concurs with previous research on child protection, which highlighted how young people may not perceive their experiences as abusive or exploitative. An ongoing relationship with a professional they trust may encourage a process of disclosing and re-assessing their experiences (Smeaton, 2013; Hallett, 2015).

The DSLs placed equal emphasis on engaging young people about the nature of the concern and outlining what a young person has the right to expect.

Daisy (DSL 1): I think it is always important to talk to children along the way so that they don't feel it's being done to them...

Similarly, most young people talked about the counsellor persuading and engaging with clients about why they were in danger, or why what was happening was not safe.

Kirsty (YP2): That you should talk to them about it first—get more information about it—tell them 'Right this is serious, now we need to tell someone about this so we can help you' but so to gain more trust—for the young person to be able to say ok—okay you can tell someone about it.

Sian (YP1): Like maybe go into more detail about it because there may be more to it.

Chelsea (YP3): How does it make you feel that your mum is not there, and you have to care of your brother and your sister, and you are missing out on your homework and your education. How does that make you feel?

Kirsty (YP2): And like it's like convincing her that it is better to do something about it than leaving it unspoken.

There were different views expressed what role the young people's wishes and consent should play in determining the outcome, i.e. whether the information would be shared or not. However, all young people agreed that this active **engagement** would be vital to protect the alliance with the counsellor. These discussions seemed to be perceived as part of a more respectful and more equal relationship which the young people expected in counselling relationships that perhaps contrasted to relationships with teachers. This suggested that young people participating in dialogue about risk they face, and having their perspective attended to, helped them to feel as if their views were being considered and that they were involved in the information process. This proposes that the practice of explaining, engaging, re-framing, convincing and exploring the young person's perspective may be empowering in and of itself, and hence feel respectful and participatory. I now move on to the participant's ideas about the importance of open and transparent communication.

Honesty and Transparency

All professionals and young people discussed the importance of open and honest communication, about sharing information and how this contributed towards maintaining trust. The counsellors focused on the importance of being transparent and giving information back to their clients about next steps, in the belief that this would serve to reduce anxiety.

Gaby (C6): I think what is important is being as clear as we can be at each stage about the limits of [...] what we can hold and what we can keep private for them and what happened to information if we need to share it... I think what we don't want to happen is for it to shut down 'I am not going to be able to tell you anything else' or 'I'm not going to be able to come back to see you' so it is about maintaining the relationship but also being really straight with them...

Three counsellors outlined structural difficulties with this process and explained how they often felt like '*piggy in the middle*' between young clients and the school safeguarding officer

who they perceived as making decisions about what would happen with information without necessarily consulting with them or informing them of their decisions.

Frances (C5): I guess the difficult thing for me is that the first thing a kid will say is "what's going to happen?" I say "I'm a bit worried about what you said to me and I think I need to pass some information on" so the next question is "well who to?" And "what happens next"... and of course I don't know...

Despite wanting to keep their client informed and reduce uncertainty, counsellors acknowledged that they are not often able to do so. Some counsellors talked about finding time to go back to the young person before the end of the day to let them know what would be likely to happen next. There was broad agreement that giving information back to the young person about what was likely to happen to their information is valuable and helps to reduce client anxiety. However, counsellors had differing structural and professional relationship experiences in their schools, which influenced their ability to achieve this for the young person.

All young people valued counsellors, being 'upfront' about their intention to share information and being honest about the processes involved. This was perceived as promoting trust and as a factor in reducing anxiety. Transparency and honesty were perceived as participatory, involving the young people in safeguarding processes. All young people asserted that the worst scenario was if their counsellor shared information without telling their clients.

Kirsty (Y2): They should tell you if they are going to pass something on – 'oh right, okay' and then you'd get suddenly pulled out of class and made to talk about it.

Emma (Y7): Not do something about it and then Lucy finds out when other teachers are coming up to her. I think that's wrong.

There was a general confidence amongst the young people that their counsellors **would** be honest with them. This was contrasted with school staff whom they asserted passed on information without involving them.

Initial Contracts

Most counsellors and DSLs talked about the importance of honest and clear initial contracts with young people that outlined the limits of confidentiality. Counsellors regarded these contracts as the bedrock of an ethical and transparent relationship with their young clients.

Bethany (C2): So my thinking behind it is that I want the contract to be as clear as possible. So if they disclose they are disclosing knowing what is going to happen— as opposed to it being a surprise.

Most young people in the research groups were equally concerned with the importance of clear and honest initial contracting. They suggested that the initial contract formed the basis of the agreement between the young person and the adult counsellor and suggested it denoted a respectful and equal relationship. Although, young people valued initial contracts they applied a contextual response to the role they played in ensuring on-going trust.

Amelia (YP6): They should tell you if they are going to pass it on or not...that's why the contract is there because as soon as you start like— having regular meetings with someone errm they tell you if like you know they tell you that they don't pass anything on unless you're in danger of your life or something major.

Some SBCs described the importance of the frankness and detail of the initial contract and the role it played in letting young people know what would happen if they disclosed. Bethany (C2) described her inclusion of the name of her safeguarding lead (Daisy DSL1) in her contract as the person to whom the information would be passed on to if a young person were in danger. Most counsellors suggested that the clarity of contracts influenced their thinking about the young person's desire for intervention in subsequent disclosures.

Ada (C1):... because you have gone through the contracting with them and they are aware of the limits that they still chose to tell you that. That's a way of seeking help and then I will get the help in a sense. Start the chain...

The Edinburgh young people's group were very unhappy with this idea. This is the group's response to Ada's quote being voiced in the film of the professionals' views.

Sian (YP1): The first person was saying that kind of stuff is basically saying that there is no trust whatsoever. Like what you tell us is not up to you to keep it or not, it's up to us— saying you need help and are just gonna tell (raised voice).

Chelsea (Y3): That sounds a bit mean to be honest, I wouldn't want to see her [K I wouldn't want to go that kind of therapist] [general agreement]

Ian (Y4): That would make people not want to say anything because you'd know it you say anything that means you're in danger she's going to go tell someone straight away [raised voice]...

Kirsty (Y2): Fair enough, you have a contract—but that doesn't mean there's still— 'you have to hold on to... I think the contract should be changed to be like 'If I am in danger ask me first before telling anyone because that would be a better way'.

The Birmingham group took a slightly different line that suggested that there might have been a subconscious intention to get help at the back of the fictional Lucy's mind.

Bella (Y8): I think she has come for help—or she is in counselling because she needs help in the first place and I think that [...] she'll go back. She might be upset and angry, but then the counsellor should be able to relieve that...

All young people agreed that initial contracts were only the beginning of the story and that counsellors would need to be transparent about any intention to share. This was complicated by reports from professionals and young people alike that disclosures might be made in a 'half knowing' way that simultaneously sought help, but feared intervention. All young participants in this study were vehement that initial contracts were insufficient to justify information sharing without further transparent discussion. This would suggest that the perception of an equitable approach needs to continue through ongoing engagement during information sharing for trust to be maintained.

Not Talking Behind Backs

Some professionals and young people proposed that counsellors should be involved in meetings between clients and DSL where the young person wished it. For young people, this represented assurance that they would know exactly what was being said.

Emma (YP7): I think Lucy should be there when, when the counsellor tells another member of staff. So it's not going to be like said wrongly or anything err I think Lucy should be there to supervise what is being said. So... if the counsellor says a wrong word, or says something wrong, then Lucy is there to correct the counsellor...

Emma (Y7) went on to say that this would lower anxiety and ‘pressure’ about what’s being said behind their backs. Other young people talked about the potential reassurance and support of having the counsellor present during the meeting with the safeguarding lead. There was also the suggestion that the counsellor could help by telling some of the story.

Kirsty (YP2): Because I think it will be scary for her to go and see another person that she doesn’t trust and tell them that. But if she goes with the counsellor... I think it would be like helpful and if she can see someone—because if the counsellor knows all of it, she can like fill them in.

Some SBCs also proposed offering to accompany young clients to the DSL. This was perceived as a way of offering extra support and reassurance, as well as emphasizing transparency and serving to maintain trust.

Curtis (C3): I would possibly like to be involved with the CPO (DSL) [...] for the child’s sake. Just to be there so that they know that no one is really going behind backs [...] and so she has her support right there.

Both groups of young people also highlighted the role of counsellors in mediating consensual information sharing to the school to support the young person.

Bella (Y8): Maybe they could mention to members of staff that the person is going through a rough time at the minute and that’s the reason she is coming in late to school or why she is not like doing her homework.

This would suggest that the young people also see the counsellor as being someone who can advocate for them within the school. This idea is supported by previous practice guidance and research this area (McGinnis, 2008; Armstrong, 2014; Fuller, 2014).

This section of the thematic analysis serves to outline how both professionals and young people value honest and transparent communication through the information sharing process. Young people prized counsellors for being ‘upfront’ about their intention to share information and for their honesty about the processes involved. A transparent approach to information sharing has been previously supported by school-based counselling practice guidelines and broadly drew its justification from the ethical principle of fidelity or trustworthiness (McGinnis, 2008; Hill et al, 2011; Fuller, 2014; BACP, 2018; DfE, 2016). Despite this, the use of transparent practices in school-based counselling has received little research scrutiny prior to this project. All the groups of participants agreed that counsellors

needed to discuss the reasons why they were concerned about the safety of the young person. This process may helpfully include some reframing or ‘*un-normalization*’ of the young clients’ situation. This participatory engagement seemed to be seen as an equitable and respectful relationship by the young participants. The value of equitable relationships, such as these, where young people’s autonomy has been identified in previous counselling research (Everall and Paulson, 2002; Lavik, 2018; Knight et al, 2018). My research illuminated how young people experience *a sense of participation* through ongoing communication with the counsellor about the nature of the concern, and what will happen next. Young people asserted that this approach was likely to reduce their anxiety.

The Relationship

This section explores the relationship during and after information sharing and considers the impact of safeguarding processes on the relationship and trust in the therapeutic alliance. I also explore how external outcomes may impact upon alliances. Finally, this section explores the differing ideas about the focus of sessions after information sharing.

Staying Focused on the Young Person

All young people and most SBCs talked about the importance of continuing to offer understanding and focusing on client’s concerns, wishes and feelings during and after disclosures and information sharing.

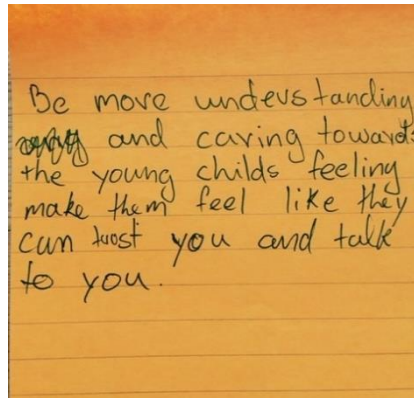
Ian (YP4): *Ask them how they feel. Ask them if they want things to change*

Kirsty (YP2): *Maybe ask Lucy [...] ‘what do you want? Like what do you want to happen? What do you want us to do about your mum?’ ...*

Ian (YP4): *Yeah, because then you know that they are there for you. They know how you feel. [Yep yep] yeah*

Central to this idea was exploring the young person’s perception of what was happening. Young people agreed they wanted counsellors who were interested in their views, even if they disagreed with them. This element is illuminated by Sian (YP1): ‘*even if they can’t do it—they still took what she wants to happen into account.*’ Young people asserted that maintaining alliances through safeguarding processes required the counsellor to retain a focus on the

client's perceptions and wishes even where they took a different view of what was required for their safety. All young people suggested that counsellors needed to maintain an understanding and caring approach to their client during and after disclosures as is illustrated on the Post It below.



The counsellors equally talked about the importance of being psychologically available to young people. This they formulated in terms of staying in contact with young people's feelings, retaining an empathic response during disclosure and information sharing. They placed emphasis on the importance of trying to understand and reflect the client's feelings. This element was talked about directly, as well as demonstrated in their imagined responses to the fictional Lucy. This was how Ada suggested she might talk to Lucy.

Ada (C1): 'It's really hard you talked about something that's going on in your life and you are worried that if I tell someone about this that Mum will get in trouble and I can really understand that.'

However, in response to the extract above some young people cautioned against insincere expressions of understanding.

Sian (Y1): It's annoying when someone says I know exactly what you're talking about. I know exactly what you are feeling because you don't— because every situation is different [mm.mm]...

This highlighted the importance of the perceived sincerity of any expressions of empathy by counsellors and suggested that a lack of sincerity may serve to undermine trust. Previous studies in alliances with young people, also caution against insincere expressions of understanding (see Baylis, 2011).

Most counsellors suggested that passing on safeguarding information can sometimes be a relief for young people that can increase trust and the perception of care. However, five counsellors chose a response to the vignette which suggested that they expected the young person to be angry about information being passed on. Frances' response was typical.

Frances (C5): I guess you acknowledge that. 'I can see you are really upset at the idea that you don't know what is going to happen now errm (.) and you may be really angry with me and you may not trust me anymore'...

This focus on young people needing empathy, for being upset and angry about information being passed on, may have been a reflection on the way the fictional vignette was written. Alternatively, it may suggest an anxious pre-occupation by the counsellors with young people being angry with them for passing on their information. This element is further illuminated in Chapter 7.

The DSLs were less focused on the role of understanding through safeguarding processes, though Daisy also indicated the importance of recognising the young people's feelings.

Daisy (DSL1): I think it is really important to listen to her and see what she thinks—because I don't live her life...

In contrast, Harriet outlined her belief that giving attention to their anxiety about the uncertainty following a disclosure was not helpful.

Harriet (DSL2): I don't often go into 'Why—what are you worried about?' because you can sometimes make those worries bigger—you know 'I'm worried that I'll be taken away' well you know I can't promise them that they won't be —you know.

Having explored the role of attending to and reflecting on, young people's feelings and wishes, I now move on to explore the closely interlinked idea of comfort and reassurance through sharing young people's information.

Offering Comfort and Reassurance

Many of the young participants talked about the importance of the counsellor offering reassurance, comfort and support through the disclosure and information sharing process. For the young people this experience of comfort often over-lapped with the experience of feeling listened to and understood as has been described above.

Ian (Y4): If it's been really emotional that they comfort you... Yeah, because then you know that they are there for you.

Ian's quote made the link between feeling understood and feeling comforted. The connection was resonant of both the psychodynamic concept of the containment proposed by Bion (1970) and the lowering of arousal and the regulation of affect that can arise for infants when their feelings are understood, processed and reflected-back in a more manageable form within dyadic encounters. This process has been the subject of contemporary neuroscientific research as reviewed by Schore (2003a, 2008). Fonagy et al. (2004) describes the process of 'mentalization' or understanding the feeling states of others, and having your own understood. The young people in this study seemed to make the direct link between trust, feeling listened to and understood and feeling comforted.

The Birmingham group felt that the counsellor had a role in offering a positive and reassuring outlook on disclosure and later safeguarding processes.

Emma (Y7): I think that [...] the [...] counsellor should... I think she should—not sweet talk her be [supportive] supportive and considerate because this is happening to Lucy. I think that the counsellor should tell her the good outcomes. What's good about telling the counsellor.

Young people acknowledged the fear that can accompany the disclosure and safeguarding processes and the need for comfort and reassurance through them. This is perhaps reminiscent of research that has suggested young people favour counsellors whom they experience as kind and caring (McLaughlin and Holliday, 2013; McArthur, 2016; Lavik, 2018).

For the counsellors in the study there seemed to be a tension about wanting to offer some sort of reassurance to the young person with a concern that it might be interpreted as telling the young person what the outcome of sharing the information will be.

Frances (C5): It's just the nervousness about what to say.... I knew that it wasn't the sort of thing that would be forwarded to social services [...] but I didn't want to say that. [Just in case] —yeah... But without kind of saying 'Don't worry' you know, errm because, of course —I don't know what else might be going on in the family...

By contrast, the DSLs in this study seemed much more willing to talk about an active need to reassure the young person.

Daisy (DSL1): I think that is very important when you deal with the safeguarding is very much about the reassurance and saying 'You have done the right thing'.

Both DSLs were concerned to let the young person know that they were not in trouble and to suggest that things would improve for them, but they were anxious to avoid any specifics about outcomes.

Harriet (DSL2): All you can promise them is that things are going to get better—what that better looks like may involve mum or not—you know.

Practical Availability, Support and Flexibility

Counsellors emphasised the importance of having the flexibility to offer young people extra practical support such as being able to accompany them when they talk to safeguarding leads, retain them beyond the limits of their counselling time, or offer them extra time during lunchtime drop-in sessions. This flexibility was valued as a means of promoting the trust in the alliance at a time when young clients might feel vulnerable and anxious. They reflected on what it might feel like for the young person to have to go back to class not knowing what was likely to happen next. Ellie (C4) talked about the importance of making sure the client was feeling robust enough to re-enter lessons.

Ellie (C4): I would hope that she is feeling better so I would make sure that she was fully (.) ready to go back in rather than just shoving her back into class.

Several counsellors talked about going back to the client before the end of the school day to let them know about what might happen next.

Ellie (C4): Well—I think what I might add is that I would go back to her before the end of the day to let her know who I had spoken to and what was going to happen—as best I could. So she didn't feel—I wouldn't like her to go home with the anxiety not knowing what was going to happen. Because I think that's really important.

Other counsellors described offering young people extra support between sessions in the lunchtime drop in 'Place2talk' sessions. This extra support was being formulated as a way of helping the young person process and contain the extra distress and anxiety about what might happen next.

Curtis (C3): I would want to keep the trust building so that she could come and share anything that is still bothering her and if something else happens... but also to keep building on her trust. I would offer her a place possibly to come and speak every day for the next few days whilst it is still raw and all unravelling.

Ada (C1) described the vulnerability of clients following disclosures and outlined her wish to have the flexibility to maintain a physical presence with the young person. However, she described how her attention was often drawn by the adult safeguarding processes and bureaucracy. These would preclude continued support for the young person in person.

Ada (C1): I wish I had two bodies one that could sit there with them and the other part of me has gone off to kind of to safeguard and do those steps.

However, Gaby suggested that sometimes it was helpful for young people to go back into lessons as this can be a helpful distraction and that feels normal for them. These ideas are further discussed in Chapter 7.

Information Sharing and Alliances with Young People

Counsellors and DSLs talked about how information sharing can affect alliances with the young people. For some, it deepened the relationship because the young person felt that somebody was listening and cared about what was happening to them. With other young people, they suggested, there might be ruptures in the relationship, if they had not been happy with the information being passed on, or with the results of that process. Four counsellors felt that it was important to emphasize that the counselling space was still available for the young person following information being passed on.

Ellie (C4): I think I would say what would be really important would be to let her know that this was still her space.

They also suggested that the process of supporting young people to express their anger (if they were angry with them) and 'containing' that anger might ultimately help re-establish trust and deepen the relationship. They proposed that keeping communication open about feelings within the relationship was helpful. Throughout, the counsellors emphasized the therapeutic opportunities of offering empathy for any negative feelings especially anger that the young people might feel about the information being passed on.

Ellie (C4): I've had situations where young people have been very angry after the disclosure and everything that has happened. But then have been able to come and tell me how angry they are. And I have been able to hold that anger and that has meant that actually the relationship became stronger.

For the counsellors, maintaining empathy in the face of potential anger demonstrated to the young people that the therapeutic relationship was still available to them. This aspect was formulated by some counsellors as an opportunity for 'rupture and repair' in the relationship drawing on theoretical ideas about attachment from Siegel (2001) and Schore (2003a) and others which suggests that young people's resilience and ability to regulate their feelings are strengthened by successful repairs in significant relationships. Thus, Ada asserted:

Ada (C1): Not everyone has good repair experience with an adult.

She might completely be mad at me and refuse to come to any session after.

I would want to try to sensitively I don't know

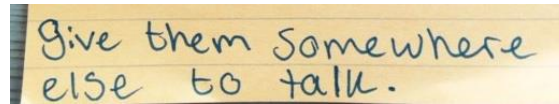
It's how you then rebuild that and sometimes that can be such a great outcome.

The first time it got ruptured and good came out of it.

Ada suggested that the therapeutic alliance is deepened by maintaining empathy for the young person's feelings even when clients are angry. The propensity for ruptures in therapeutic relationships with young people is supported by some previous research (See Kazdin, 1990, 2005; Lavik et al. 2018). Four of the counsellors interviewed directly evoked ideas of rupture and repair from attachment theory and affect regulation research when describing young people's reactions to information sharing (Siegal, 2001; Schore 2003a; Stern, 2004). These ideas were then applied to conceptualising the reparative function of the therapeutic relationship. However, this was also an area of dissonance for counsellors, as is explored further in Chapter 7. My reading of this dissonance suggested that whilst most of the counsellors seemed to have knowledge of the theory of 'rupture and repair', they did not express confidence in its validity in the context of individual counselling relationships and they tended to be anxious about the ongoing damage to alliances. Later, Ada described what she saw as the dilution of the relationship through information sharing.

Ada (C1): You are aware of the relationship you are aware of the child and the further it goes out —it gets lost that special bond. The place that created the ability to talk about something like that.

This conversely implied that something is lost as well as gained from the therapeutic space by the act of sharing information from it. This idea was also raised by Edinburgh young people's group, who inferred that if the information was shared without permission, the therapeutic space would be damaged. The Post It below suggests that in this situation, the young person would need 'somewhere else' to talk.



For the counsellors, the reactions of young people were determined by a combination of factors, including the intention of the client in making the disclosure and the real-world outcome in terms of the action of the school safeguarding officer or children's services (if such a referral is made). Ellie (C4) went on to suggest that sometimes she can become unhappy about subsequent damage to therapeutic alliances when she does not agree with the safeguarding decisions made by her organization. But she still maintained that the relationship will ultimately be repaired.

Ellie (C4): Ultimately (.) my initial thought is the most important thing is that we can preserve the relationship (faster) and that's ultimately (.) but unfortunately that isn't (.) the most important thing when it comes to safeguarding. And a lot of times the direction that I have to—that I'm given (.) means that the relationship could possibly be jeopardised. ... But to be completely honest (.) ultimately (.) the relationship does (.) eventually (.) get repaired.

In the professional group meeting, Bethany (C2) and Gaby (C6) highlighted the distributed nature of the safeguarding system that involves different people (and organisations) who may take differing positions on what should happen with a young person's information. They suggested that this inevitably causes differences of opinion, delays and uncertainty. This, in turn, they said may affect the trust between the counsellor and young people.

Gaby (C6): So the strength of the system is that we bring all these people together— but that is also the Achilles heel in that they are left in a state of uncertainty.

Bethany (C2): I think that question that the young people ask me is 'how this is going to make my life better?' that makes me feel [yes—yes] that makes me feel awful. [Laugh] because you know so many cases you see where you think 'ok loads of stuff has come out, but it has not met the threshold—not much has changed actually...

In my initial feedback to the national group of Place2Be counsellors, frustration was expressed about the difficulty of maintaining alliances in the face of real-world difficulties in the safeguarding processes at the adult level. The counsellors cited pressures on child services, high thresholds for accessing support and differing opinions between the Place2Be and school safeguarding teams about priorities and the perceived seriousness of disclosures. The group conveyed their belief that all these factors greatly impacted outcomes for the young person which in turn impacted on their alliances with them. Most young people also acknowledged that what happened in a relationship with a young client may partially be a function of whether they were happy with the outcome of safeguarding processes in the outside world.

Bella (YP8): I think that if the counsellor shares the information with somebody else and then I think that if that gets sorted out like [...] before [...] she talks about something else that might be happening it might then give her the confidence to carry on with the counselling. If that has a positive outcome then—if she has benefitted from it [...] then maybe, she'll think that it's a good thing to do.

Most counsellors emphasized the real-world benefits of safeguarding processes and how this increased trust and a perception of being listened to and cared about.

Curtis (C3): For me as well it brought on the relationship— when I think that then they thought 'actually someone cares about me 'and that's what this can lead to and that's what this can lead to well, actually somebody cares — is actually there for me, someone is actually listening to me.

Overall, young people and school counsellors agreed that trust in relationships will be maintained through a continued emotional availability through information sharing in which the counsellor continues to be sensitively focused on young people's feelings.

The next section describes the differing reactions about how counsellors should work with young clients in the sessions following information sharing.

Next Sessions

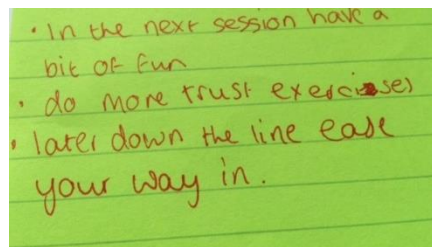
There was considerable difference of opinion between young people and counsellors about what should happen in sessions following any information sharing. Most counsellors felt that

it would be important to ‘check in’ on the trust in the alliance in a session following information being shared.

Gaby (C6): So we are working in a child-centred service [laugh] where generally the agenda is set by the young person, but I think in a situation like this you really want to be bringing it back to what happened and how you’re feeling about it now? ... How you feel afterwards? How do you feel about what’s been happening since then? How is it to come back and see me today? What do you want to say to me? [Laughs] and it’s okay if you’re angry with me.

In contrast, all young people felt that it should be the client’s decision whether they talked about what had happened in the previous session. They were clear that the agenda of the session should be set by the young person. They agreed with the counsellors that next sessions should be about re-establishing trust, but they took a very different view about how that should be done. Young people emphasized doing something fun, using art, playing games or doing ‘trust exercises’.

Emma (Y7): I don’t think she (the counsellor) should say anything—I think they should do something fun that’ll take her mind off of it [others yeah yeah] And go that was last session let’s not forget about but let’s talk about when you feel more comfortable. To let her gain that trust back and to make her err you know—I do trust my counsellor and that—I do want to go back and she is not forcing me to say something... They should maybe let Lucy paint how she is feeling or play a game—do something nice just to go—that was the last session and this is something new... It’s not up to the counsellor—what they talk about... it’s not the adult that needs help.



These ideas are highly reminiscent of Baylis’s (2011) study of involving children (age 6-12) which suggested that initially counsellors working with children need to concentrate on Alliance Dependent Behaviours (active listening, being child-focused, expressing caring and doing fun activities) in order to develop the working alliance before moving on to Alliance

Expectant Behaviours (validating feelings and problem solving). That study suggested that where ruptures in the alliance occur, it is necessary to return to concentrating on Alliance Dependent Behaviours such as doing fun activities.

Reflecting on this data from young people, the professional group talked about how this ‘*checking-in*’ in next sessions could be prompted by counsellor’s anxiety. The group suggested that inexperienced counsellors might be more likely to do this to assuage their own anxiety that something might be ‘broken’ in the relationship. However, they also discussed situations where they felt it was necessary for the therapeutic work to name what had happened in the relationship. In contrast, most young people wanted to avoid feeling exposed and under pressure to talk about difficult feelings. Most young people from the Birmingham group also suggested that maintaining, or, if necessary, repairing the relationship constituted ‘*another piece of work*’ for the counsellor and might require further training for inexperienced counsellors.

*Bella: (YP 8) She might be upset and angry, but then the counsellor should be able to relieve that a little bit because they should know different tactics that they could use with the child. **It’s kind of like another piece of work in one respect** [Bella’s emphasis].*

In the professional group counsellors also discussed young people’s views on their ownership of the therapeutic agenda and went on to discuss whether it was better to ‘hold on to’ anxiety whilst doing something ‘fun’ which might feel very inauthentic for counsellors. They questioned whether such incongruence would be supportive of trust in the relationship. They concluded by outlining their belief in the therapeutic value offered by ‘*giving permission*’ for young people to express difficult feelings within the relationship. This was an issue where the young people’s views were at greatest divergence from those of the professionals, although both groups acknowledged the hard work of re-establishing trust.

Power and Participation

I now consider the experiences of power and control for participants/groups during information sharing. I start by exploring the sense of feeling ‘*out of control*’ described by the young participants. I then consider the counsellors’ experience of power through safeguarding processes concentrating on the organisational approach to reporting safeguarding concerns,

including the application of low thresholds for sharing information. I then compare the adults' and young people's ideas about issues of consent, the degree of risk that warrants information sharing and participation in safeguarding processes.

'It's Basically Taking the World from Under Your Feet'

The young people referred to the loss of control that they might feel during information sharing. This was described by one young person as the '*domino effect*' and was regarded as a key factor that increased anxiety, being closely associated with the uncertainty of not knowing what might happen after information had been shared. Young people described feeling like a chain of events gets initiated which changes the character of the counselling sessions. Many of them suggested it transformed the counselling space from one where the young person might feel free to offload anything, within a 'non-judgmental' relationship with one trusted adult, to a space where words could have unknown consequences. These consequences might include the involvement of other adults and hence have the potential for feeling exposed.

Kirsty (YP2): it's basically taking the world from under your feet— you come in to talk to someone because you are nervous or worried about something and you just want to get something off your chest. You end up being told 'this is what's happening right now this very, very second' It's not like you're going to be 'ok alright then fine'. Because you are scared, and you want to be heard and talk to someone. That's why you go.

Most of the counsellors also commented on this shift. This is Ellie (C4), who described this phenomenon from the perspective of the counsellor.

Ellie (C4) And it can sometimes feel so impinging... they're really enjoying your company and they're enjoying being there [faster] and then suddenly they say something and I'm thinking "oh flip! They've been playing this computer game and its over 18". Or whatever it is and then I'm going to have to break that fun—break that creativity and it just feels so impinging. "Oh, by the way I'm going to do this thing now" and they leave the room feeling more upset than when they came in.

To potentially support/protect the young people in their outer lives, the sessions may have to move from being determined by the young person's agenda to preparing the young person for adult safeguarding processes. At these times, the counsellors may/ appear to take charge suddenly. Both counsellors and young people remarked on the disruption of this. The

perception was that this shift can change *the rules of engagement* of counselling sessions. This factor is exacerbated by the unique nature of interpersonal therapy where across a range of orientations the basic principle is that the client determines what they bring/talk about in sessions. As described in Chapter 2, this originated in Freud's psychoanalytic idea of the importance of a client engaging in 'free-association'. These ideas also extend to the very different theoretical basis of Person Centred and non-directive play therapy that emphasise 'self-actualizing tendency' and a 'child-led' approach that focuses on clients' autonomy and self-determination (Mearns and Thorne, 2007). The ethos of the Place2Be draws on such theories and emphasises that the young person should choose what they bring to their counselling sessions (Place2Be, 2018). The abrupt change of focus that safeguarding initiates was described by one young person

Kirsty (YP2): Because when someone tells you they are going to be in control of your life. That's not what you want to hear. And you want to like have some control over it.

My data suggested that the young people were very aware of this shift and are in danger of feeling a sudden loss of autonomy in sessions where disclosures are made. Where there has been abuse or exploitation this feeling may also be exacerbated by their experiences of the way adult power has previously been used as a malignant force in their lives and something that is 'not to be trusted' (Westergaard, 2013; Hallett, 2015; Collin-Vezina et al., 2016). Both counsellors and young people suggested that something happens in the role that counsellors are enacting following disclosures where it can feel as if there has been a shift in the relationship from a young person focused agenda to an adult-focused agenda. Young people can feel very confused by this shift and my data from the counsellors suggested that they also feel uncomfortable about the change in their role at these times.

The young people were all agreed that information sharing should go at the pace of the young person to mitigate against the young person feeling out of control. This is Sian (YP1) reflecting on what the counsellor could do in the Lucy vignette.

Sian (YP1): I wrote that she should pass it on to someone she also trusts so like a family member or maybe like a teacher who will be able to talk to her about like her situation with her education in school... But it sort of— needs to go slowly.

Some young people talked about ensuring that counsellors had all the relevant information before initiating safeguarding processes. They also suggested counsellors should pass on the

information to somebody that the young person trusts and that would help clients to feel less anxious and out of control.

I now turn to the counsellors' and the DSLs' experiences of power and control in safeguarding processes. These inevitably form the outer context to SBC information sharing.

Counsellors and DSL Experiences of Power in Safeguarding Processes

All counsellors perceived the requirement to pass on safeguarding information as mandatory and believed they had little control over it. Thus, Bethany (C6) asserted '*you've got to do because it is safeguarding*'. Curtis referred to Place2Be training where it had been discussed that a counsellor had previously been sacked for not passing on information.

Curtis (C3): No, no-good—(.) I mean they scare you at the beginning— I mean the Place2Be. That you've got to refer you've got to report it to your line manager... they have dismissed (nervous laugh) someone who didn't and went home and it later came out that she should have reported this.

This statement caused me to reflect on how the counsellors in this study may have felt unable to express views that were contrary to the position of the organisation. It is noticeable that only one of the counsellors, for example, explicitly described information sharing as a decision-making process. This contrasts with how I had originally conceived this project where I had imagined the balancing of confidentiality of sessions, and the autonomy of the young people against the risks they might face. Such an active ethical decision-making process was a central finding of the Palmer and Jenkins (2012) study in this area. The culture of the Place2Be does not conceptualise information sharing as an ethical dilemma (Place2Be, 2015, 2018). This might make it difficult for counsellor participants to feel free to articulate any dilemmas they may actually experience. My close reading of the data suggested that the counsellors **are** in fact making active decisions about sharing, or not sharing, information, but that they do not feel licensed to describe safeguarding in these terms. The Place2Be information for schools describes their safeguarding policy as based on '*robust data-keeping and reporting*' (Place2Be, 2015, 2018). This model would be attractive to the education culture of collaborative information sharing to support and protect children (Music, 2008). It might also assuage any anxiety that some school staff might feel about the confidential aspects of counselling as outlined by the Hamilton-Roberts study (2012). Further, Jenkins (2010) suggests the belief amongst counsellors that sharing child protection information is currently

mandatory for counsellors is widely held and this may influence school counsellors' practice and professional discourse. In this sense, the counsellor's professional judgement and phronesis about information sharing decisions may be being obscured by what is regarded as permissive professional discourse.

Despite not explicitly describing information sharing as a decision-making process, all six counsellors implied discomfort about over-riding young people's autonomy at some point during their interviews. These reflections were often expressed indirectly and often contradicted on other occasions. Such contradictions themselves may be indicative of some ambivalence about information sharing sitting below the surface of the expressed communication in the interviews. Bethany expressed one such contradiction.

Bethany (C2): And I think there is something very undermining about saying "right well, we're going to pass on to somebody else and you don't get a choice in that" (.) so if possible I try to acknowledge the process that led her to that point and outline really—well really I'm not asking I'm saying that's what's going to happen next.

The young people's response to this quote was vociferous. Some talked about how acting in this way would result in there being 'no trust what-so-ever' (Ian, YP4). Kirsty (YP2) outlined what she saw as the danger of this approach.

Kirsty (YP2): That would just break the trust—errm (.) it might make the young person do something rash—irrational and could make the situation even worse.

Ellie (C4) in contrast to other counsellor participants did formulate information sharing as a decision-making process. She discussed the strong contradictory feelings she experienced in relation to such sharing.

Ellie (C4): I think the biggest challenge for me has been the on the spot moment of (.) trying to decide whether it needs to be raised or not... I've ended up with sometimes with kind of a feeling of (.) guilt almost. Like you know I have done this terrible thing—I have betrayed their trust... in my kind of (.) logic side of my brain, and if I bring myself back into sense again I know that's not true. ... I do start to question (.) 'How would I feel when I was 13 if I began to trust (.) this person and I opened up to them and I told them all these things and they made a judgement about me?'

Later, Ellie expressed her mixed feelings about the protocols that determine her practice within her organisation. In the quote below, she described how following protocol, sometimes gets in the way of doing what feels right for her client.

Ellie (C4): I can see why they have such strict policies (quieter) but that is what gets in the way ultimately of us ultimately being able to do what (.) I think would be the best thing to do. (Laughs)... where it has just felt that the (.) —following the step-by-step procedure has not felt like the right thing (quieter)... I think organisations are so big now and they have to protect themselves as well as protecting the young people. And I think sometimes –sometimes protecting themselves might get in the way of protecting the young people (quieter).

By contrast, other counsellors described the act of sharing information as something that they have no choice over. Using a Foucauldian lens, it could be argued that the counsellors may have ‘governmentalized’, or internalised the Place2Be culture of the mandatory information sharing (Foucault, 1979). Equally, the same counsellors also expressed dissonance, discomfort and implied resistance about the need to follow stringent safeguarding protocols, and the potential impact this can have on some on some therapeutic alliances with young people. This was often discussed in the context of low thresholds for passing on information.

A simple navigation of some of the counsellor interview transcripts revealed many references to ‘*doing the right thing*’ amongst the data. In Curtis’ transcript for example, there were five references to ‘*doing the right thing*’ four of which refer to following correct protocol and one, to the actual impact on young people’s lives. Curtis’ implied fear of ‘getting it wrong’ and pre-occupation with correct protocol also appeared in the data from the other counsellors, as is further explored in Chapter 7. This echoed similar professional pre-occupation with ‘getting it right’ described in the Munro Report on Child Protection (2011) and in Bellamy and Raab (2010). Previous research has highlighted the unintended consequences of increasing bureaucratisation of child protection systems as a loss of focus on young people themselves and a decreasing acknowledgement of the active professional decision-making (Ruch, 2013).

The Place2Be had valid reasons for being anxious as an organisation about safeguarding, during this research. The fieldwork took place in the year following the abrupt closure of Kids Company, another large voluntary organisation providing therapeutic support for young people, amid accusations about mismanagement of finance, sexual assault allegations and poor safeguarding structures (The Guardian Aug 7, 2015). My interviews took place in the

months that immediately followed, amid speculation about whether other children's charities would equally lose government funding support and face closure. Gaby reflected on the organisational anxiety that she had experienced at the Place2Be. She described what she saw as a defensive practice that impacted both her own sense of autonomy in her work, and on maintaining alliances and the autonomy of the young clients themselves.

Gaby (C6):... it bothers me that sometimes [...] practice is defensive, practice is influenced by anxiety about getting it wrong and that can be really distracting from thinking about the young person in the centre of it.

This is reminiscent of psychoanalytic treatment of complex processes that arise in organisations that work with vulnerable people to defend against the anxiety involved (See Menzies-Lyth 1992; De Board, 2014). These ideas underpin the concept of defensive practice. The impact of a pre-occupation with safeguarding bureaucracy, versus a focus on the young person themselves is further elucidated in Chapter 7.

For the DSLs interviewed the experiences of control through these processes, was less focused on the relationships with students and more on their own role as a conduit of safeguarding information. However, neither DSLs described this role in empowering terms. Harriet suggested that she had no choice herself, but to pass information on. Reflecting on the fictional Lucy vignette she responded:

Harriet (DSL2): I would explain to her that I would have —you know— I can't (.) I'm not allowed to— just hold on to that information.

Daisy (DSL1) seemed to imply a more active decision-making process about decisions to forward the information from counselling sessions. She reflected on having to put her emotional reaction to the young person's situation aside and having to think pragmatically about 'Right! What are we going to do?' She described decisions being constrained by the resources and level of need both in her school, and in the London borough in which she works. She described feeling 'saturated' and overwhelmed, not being adequately supported and lacking any supervision. Daisy reported seeking help from her line manager who responded curtly 'well you seem to be doing alright'. Although, she felt personally responsible for decision-making, her sense of autonomy was curtailed, by being overwhelmed in the face

of the level of need in her school and a lack of support and resources.³⁴

Four counsellors suggested they felt that they had little control over what happened once the information had been passed on to DSLs. They suggested that they had little input in any subsequent referrals to children's services. Most described having had difficulty in finding out about the outcomes of any information sharing.

Ada (C1): You email. Can you please update me? That doesn't happen often either— So you are also left wondering 'What went on?'

These same counsellors described themselves as caught between the Place2Be safeguarding team and the school safeguarding processes. Often the safeguarding team at the Place2Be wanted information to be passed to external agencies such as CAMHs and children's services. School safeguarding leads, however, may have taken an alternative view and have had different priorities. Several counsellors echoed Ellie's description of feeling like '*a little bit piggy in the middle*' between the school and the Place2Be during safeguarding processes. A psychosocial analysis of the feelings of disempowerment of some of the counsellors in this study may indicate that they may have internalised the projected or counter-transferential powerlessness of the young people with whom they work (Clarkson 2004; Rowan & Jacobs, 2002). In this way, they may be experiencing feelings that may originate in the young people's experiences as is further discussed in Chapter 7.

The young people responded to what they perceived to be a lack of control by some counsellors in the professionals' film that, if this was the case, they needed to be clear and honest about that.

Kirsty (YP2): Then it should be, even if we did tell someone else—I don't know what is going to happen and yeah.

Two of the counsellors (Ellie, C4 and Bethany, C2) talked at other points about their DSL asking their advice about potential next steps. They both expressed some ambivalence about this aspect and reflected on DSLs' lack of supervision arrangements, and their need for a

³⁴ It is worth noting at this point that Daisy resigned her post before the conclusion of the fieldwork for this research and in communications with me attributed this to the factors described above.

'listening ear' and 'containment' in their challenging role (Winnicott, 1965a). Such a role supporting safeguarding leads could raise opportunities for greater inter-professional containment, mutuality and support.

'The Slightest Whiff of Anything Really': The Impact of Low Thresholds

Bethany (C2): Place2Be child protection very much errs on the side of sharing information appropriately with DSL. What I'd like to call the slightest whiff of anything really.

Three of the counsellors interviewed expressed discomfort that low thresholds for passing on information curtailed young people's autonomy and could potentially disrupt therapeutic relationships. Conversely, the same counsellors also described how Place2Be safeguarding processes could deepen relationships as young people felt cared about and their difficulties were recognised. The stringency of the Place2Be safeguarding training was reflected in the data from the counsellors in this study.

Curtis (C3): When it comes to safeguarding? The training from the Place2Be we had quite intensive training and policies explaining what we needed to do and the processes to follow.

This training influenced decisions about what was regarded as risky or unsafe for young people and hence what information needed to be passed on. Most professionals commented on the low thresholds that the Place2Be operate with and hence the frequency of sharing. This factor influenced the degree of privacy afforded a young person. The counsellors and DSLs expressed mixed and contradictory views about low thresholds.

Bethany (C2): That kind of line that Place2Be takes which almost goes into any sign of distress and I'm thinking "distress is human". It's not a child protection issue.

Bethany also expressed frustration at automatic referrals to CAMHs for any form of self-harming behaviour. She cited young people scratching or cutting themselves with pencil sharpener blades and described how many of these referrals were unsuccessful because of CAMHs conversely high thresholds. Further, she suggested young people may not necessarily engage with CAMHs and they may feel let down by the counsellor that facilitated the disclosure, with whom they have made a relationship. This in turn may leave them without support.

Bethany (C2): I think their experience is that 'I just told you! (Emphasis)'. Now you are going to tell Daisy (DSL1) and she's gonna tell someone else. "Yeah—wish I hadn't bothered".

Gaby (C6) described a situation where she was told by her manager to pass on information about a young person being distressed because there might be unexpressed suicidal ideation. She described how it felt like it interrupted the work and impacted negatively on their relationship as it *'felt like we were midway through a conversation'*. At the point of the interview, her depressed young client had not come to her two subsequent counselling appointments following the information being shared. Her concern was that she might not return and might hence lose the support that would also have contributed to her safety.

Daisy (DSL1), in her interview, outlined how she found the 'rigour' of the low thresholds of the Place2Be useful in preventing her from becoming desensitised and complacent. However, she also expressed frustration with low thresholds and described an example of counsellors passing on information about arguments in the playground, as safeguarding. Her reservations centred on the large volume of counselling referrals created by low thresholds. This she suggested impeded her effectiveness for children who were at greater risk

Daisy (DSL1): My resources are limited. So then the gap widens down at the bottom as well and then you have to be careful not to miss stuff.

Choice, Compromise or 'Picking up the Adult Authority'

Most counsellors described wanting to support the autonomy of young people by offering choices through safeguarding processes but highlighted the structural obstacles to this. Obstacles ranged from difficulty accessing school DSLs or feeling disempowered in their professional relationships with them. Ellie (C4) and Gaby (C6) expressed their desire to help young people feel more empowered by listening to their views and concerns and offering them choices within the information sharing process.

*Gaby (C6): Trying to keep them feeling that they have some kind of control over what happens even if sharing information is not what they want to happen [yeah]. They still have choices about **how** it happens.*

Most counsellors expressed the desire to give young client's some control in the process of information sharing but felt constrained by school and Place2Be safeguarding policies and

practice. Below Ellie (C4) described how she said she would like to work but did not feel able to within the constraints of her role.

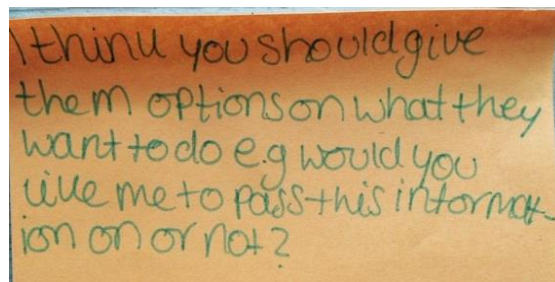
*Ellie (C4): So err 'What I would like us to do is maybe is think together about how you would like us to let the school know or to let mum know that this has come up. We might not be able to do exactly what you want to do, but maybe we can make a compromise together about how are going to do it.' Because I think that empowers the young person to have a little bit of control over it—because it's their information—because they told it to you is still theirs —just because they told you it doesn't mean it's not **theirs** [emphasis] any more.... It would certainly leave the young person with the impression that you **cared** [Ellie's emphasis] about their decisions and you cared about their voice.*

Young people responded very positively to being played this quote in the film representing the professional views.

Ian. (YP4): She is basically saying everything that we have said we would like to happen. All-understanding—working together.

Kirsty. (YP2): She said that she was going to take Lucy's views into account. She wasn't going to say this is what is going to happen.

All young people expressed a desire to be given choices and options through the process as it has been illustrated above and below. However, the Edinburgh group placed the greatest emphasis on 'consent' for sharing. However, the use of the word consent has been used in particular ways, and applied differently at different points across the duration of young people's groups, as is developed in the section to follow.



Other counsellors expressed the desire to give the young client some power by attempting to give back to them information about possible next steps after the concern had been shared with the DSL.

Ada (C1): Yes (.) you don't have control of the fact it leaves the relationship. But the child can be informed who is going to be informed.

By contrast, Frances expressed ambivalence about whether it is helpful to give clients any choices about the safeguarding processes, as her belief is that young people expect adults to share information if they are in danger. Daisy (DSL1) talked about the importance of asking young people about their views of what should happen next, especially with older clients.

Daisy (DSL1): I think it is really important to listen to her and see what she thinks. I am always really mindful about not swooping in and going, this is what should happen because I don't live her life.

Daisy also described other ways in which she gives young people an opportunity to take power, such as giving them time to communicate the concern to their parents themselves before she does.

Daisy (DSL1):... with the older ones and if we need to have a conversation with mum in some cases I kind of give them an evening talk to mum or dad before I kind of ring up...

Harriet (DSL2) however, described talking to young people about how she has no choice but to share their information and her belief that it is often a relief for the young person '... so when you say that you don't have any choice, it is almost like a relief.' She also outlined her perception that ultimately it does not affect the overall trust in the counselling in the long term. Harriet also described her belief that young people usually accept the adult authority as a demonstration of caring about their safety. She believed that young people eventually tend to acquiesce in some way to information being passed on.

Harriet (DSL2):... our job is to make sure that you are safe... And you are going to have to trust me because I am the adult. And I have to make that decision' and usually they kind of go 'ok'—you know'... it is important— but it's not absolutely crucial to get them to kind of (.) consent... —once you have explained why you have to do what you have to do— they go 'okay'...

All counsellors stated at some point, that sometimes it is important to 'pick up their adult authority' and inform young people what is going to happen next rather than ask them. Below Gaby (C6) described how that in some situations it can increase anxiety and be a burden to be given choices.

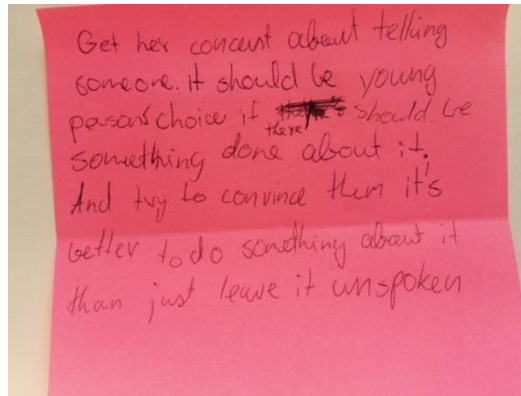
*Gaby (C6):... the child got very upset about the idea about information about the family taken outside the room and actually and actually having a conversation about... what you want to happen next—those open-ended questions were not helpful to her.... So actually the most **containing** thing to do was to say “Bell is going—do you think like you can go back to your class?”*

To describe this use of adult authority in information sharing processes the counsellors most often used the word ‘containment’. However, counsellors seemed to be talking about setting limits and boundaries much as a parent might for a young infant when trying to protect them from dangers. Their descriptions seemed to be somewhat more related to the psychodynamic concept of the ‘holding-environment’ as described by object-relations theorist Winnicott (1965a). This is likened to the role of care-givers who isolate the infant from undue stress until they slowly develop the capacity to deal with frustrations and difficulty.³⁵ In the context of information sharing, the counsellors seemed not to be referring to Bion’s (1970) ideas about the role of the reflective function of an adult who can empathically attune, digest and reflect distressing feelings in a way that is more manageable and soothing, and allows for thinking about feelings. The exception to this was in connection with being able to reflect and hold the young people’s anger in the face of potential ruptures following information sharing. Could the theoretical concept of containment be being merged with more everyday notions of constraining young people? There were many references to counsellor psychological availability throughout the interviews; however, the word ‘containment’ was not directly being associated by counsellors with this availability. Instead, my reading of the data suggested the selective use of these theoretical ideas in ways that may be over-privileging adult authority. I now go on to develop the young people’s specific sub-themes that deal with consent and participation.

³⁵ This theory suggests that within this ‘protected’ space the child can begin to develop the capacity to recognise thoughts and feelings, to develop symbols, play and develop a secure sense of self through the inter-relationship with the care-giver (Winnicott, 1965a).

Consent and Participation

All young people wanted to feel involved in the decision-making process around information sharing. Opinions varied about the degree of this participation. For some young people this equated to consent being necessary before information sharing.



These young people were concerned about damage to trust in the relationship that could arise if the information was shared against the client's wishes. They suggested that not only should it be the young person who would determine whether information was shared outside of the counselling relationship, but they believed that sharing without consent might cause harm to the client.

Kirsty (YP2): That would just break the trust—errm (.) if that happens, it might make the young person do something rash...irrational and could make the situation even worse.

Where professionals in the film were discussing passing on information against the wishes of the young person, they talked about how sharing without consent erodes the essential value of the counselling space. They also asserted it would cause clients to retract disclosures.

Sian (YP1): That's the main reason she wants to go is because she wants to talk about it... It will probably stop her from talking—she'll maybe will end up denying everything.

Both young people's groups discussed the counsellor convincing young clients about the danger they were in, and how outside intervention would help them.

Kirsty (YP2): Like have more meetings and talk and talk and talk. And then she might just go for it [.] because some things might happen at home that might convince her to go for help and yeah...

However, the Edinburgh group placed the greatest emphasis on staying focused on the young person's immediate concerns and allowing her/him to be in control. They asserted that sharing of information should be an agreement between counsellor and young people.

*Sian (YP1): I think you should talk about it with the therapist, about it first...that **you** agree to like [...] tell someone else [Sian's emphasis].*

However, these views were moderated later when discussing both the degree of danger a young person faced and whether other younger children were at risk.

Ian (Y4): It could depend on how serious the situation was [go on] if it were not too serious or if they were not in big danger they could just leave it— but if it's really bad—if something really bad could happen then it could endanger their life. They probably should tell someone...

In discussion, the Edinburgh group eventually agreed that if there was a serious threat to another child's safety then sharing without consent was justified. However, the consensus view was that the counsellor had a responsibility to try as hard as possible to seek consent.

In contrast, some of the young people in the Birmingham group talked at length about how temporality can impact the counselling relationship following disclosures. They reflected on how young people may be angry initially about the idea of their information being passed on, but they may later recognize that it was done to support them and be grateful for the care it implied. They inferred that sometimes it may be necessary to take power as an adult which may reduce young people's autonomy in the short term, in order to get them the help they need.

Emma (YP 7): But in the long term she will thank the counsellor and say 'thank you even if I didn't like it at the time—thank you because I knew you were trying to help me not be stressed and everything' but at the time she won't be happy with it.

T. Do you think Lucy will come back to the next session?

Emma (YP7): Yeah...

T: You are all nodding your head, I'm noticing.

Bella (YP8): Because deep down she knows it was the right thing to do. She might not have liked it, but she knows it was the best for her really.

This group were convinced that the fictional Lucy would return to the counselling sessions after her information had been passed on, as she had come to counselling ‘*because she wanted help*’ in the first place.

An intriguing dissonance emerged in the thematic data when discussing issues of power and participation. The Edinburgh group, who were adamant that information should not be shared without consent, conversely described the Place2Be as an organisation where the adults did go slowly, listened to their views and communicated with them in a way that gave them options. This contrasted substantively with the participating counsellors’ perception of the organisation. This confidence expressed by young people, in the Place2Be operating engaged and participatory practice was often contrasted with the way they believed school staff interacted with them in similar situations.

Sian (YP1): I mean a lot —like here —the Place2Be people when you go and talk to them they take it slowly and they help you. But if you go and speak to your erm go and talk to your actual school house person they normally just spring it on you. Like you get pulled out of class or something... It doesn’t really help it just makes you feel really bad about it.

Most counsellors whilst seeking to empower young people, also articulated the need to sometimes be a responsible adult who will make the decision to share young people’s information, if necessary, by over-riding the young person’s wishes. At different points, counsellors also expressed discomfort about this aspect of their role. In reflecting on this disjuncture in my data, I surmised that it is likely that counsellors were concerned to present their practice to me in a light that they believed would meet the approval of the Place2Be safeguarding team. This could mean that they are behaving in a more participatory way in practice than they are actually acknowledging in our interviews.

This was Kirsty (YP2) and Sian (YP1) again in response to the clip of counsellor Ellie talking about the importance of compromising with young people on how their information is shared and listening to client’s feelings.

Kirsty (YP2): Even if they can’t do it—they still took what she wants to happen into account.

Sian (YP1): She understands—she knows what to do—she sounds like she takes time to talk to people and doesn’t rush them. Because she said about someone who was really

angry and then came back that's showing that there is still some trust there. Even if they are angry they still feel like they can go and tell that person that they are angry... You know that they are there for you.

This suggested that the perception of the adult counsellor who is talking about the nature of the concern, listening to their feelings and giving them options where possible, changes the experience of power for the young person. Further, I propose that the word 'consent' was being interpreted in a unique and nuanced way by the young people in this study. The feeling that information sharing is happening with a young person's 'consent' may in fact be a function of how counsellors are relating, engaging and working alongside their young clients during these processes. These ideas are further formulated in the chapter summary below.

A summary of the thematic analysis

Disclosure as a dilemma: All young people seemed to agree that disclosure was perceived as a risk and a dilemma. There were strong narratives around *'getting taken away from your mum and families split up'* if children's services became involved. Participants discussed how young people did not know whether things would get better or worse following a disclosure. Their ideas echoed those of the school counsellors in that they believed that young people are often in two minds about sharing. The participants contrasted situations where young people were happy with the help they received following disclosures, with situations where the information being passed on, prevented clients from disclosing further concerns.

Trust: Trust emerged as a complex and multi-dimensional construct. As the data analysis progressed trust was discussed in terms of the relationship, time, the young person's hopes and intentions about the counselling as help-seeking and perceptions of confidentiality, privacy and protection from the exposure to shame. When information was shared with DSLs the outcome of any resulting actions outside of the counselling relationship were also deeply implicated in ongoing perceptions of trust.

Engagement, honest communication and transparency: All participants talked about the importance of staying engaged with young people. Honest communication was perceived as promoting trust and as a factor in reducing anxiety for young people. Transparent and honest communication was also perceived as involving young people in the information sharing process. In this sense, it was perceived as a participatory practice. This process may include

some 'un-normalization' for the young people where counsellors would explore in depth how their situation is 'not ok' for the exact nature of the risks that they might face.

Relationships: The young people and counsellors talked about the importance of continuing to listen to clients' concerns and feelings during and after information sharing. The young people valued counsellors who were able to offer them comfort and reassurance. There was an acknowledgement that what happens in a relationship with a young person whose information has been passed on may partially be a function of whether they are happy with the outcome of processes in the outside world. Young people suggested that maintaining or, if necessary, repairing the relationship constituted '*another piece of work*' for the counsellor. Young participants talked about allowing the client to set the agenda in next sessions. In contrast, counsellors emphasised the importance of checking in on the trust, the alliance and their feelings about the safeguarding processes. They also made reference to this as a process of rupture and repair. Counsellors emphasised the importance of having the flexibility to offer young people extra practical support such as additional contact. DSLs asserted their belief that ultimately information sharing did not damage counselling relationships.

Power and Participation: It was agreed that young people experience a loss of control during information sharing and this was regarded as a key factor that increased anxiety. Young participants emphasized a need to go at the young person's pace. They wanted to feel involved in the decision-making process. Opinions varied about the degree of this participation. For some young people this equated to '*consent*' being necessary before information sharing. However, young people perceived consent as a function of the degree of engagement and manner of communication with counsellors. Counsellors being honest, attending to the young person's views and explaining about the nature of the concern was perceived as participatory.

Other young people reflected that it was possible to be unhappy at the time about information being passed on, but to thank the counsellor later for getting help. Young people suggested that the degree of risk affected such decisions, as did any risk to other children. Most counsellors and one of the DSL expressed their desire to help young people feel more empowered in the information sharing process by listening to their views and offering them choices, but they discussed the structural difficulties in doing this.

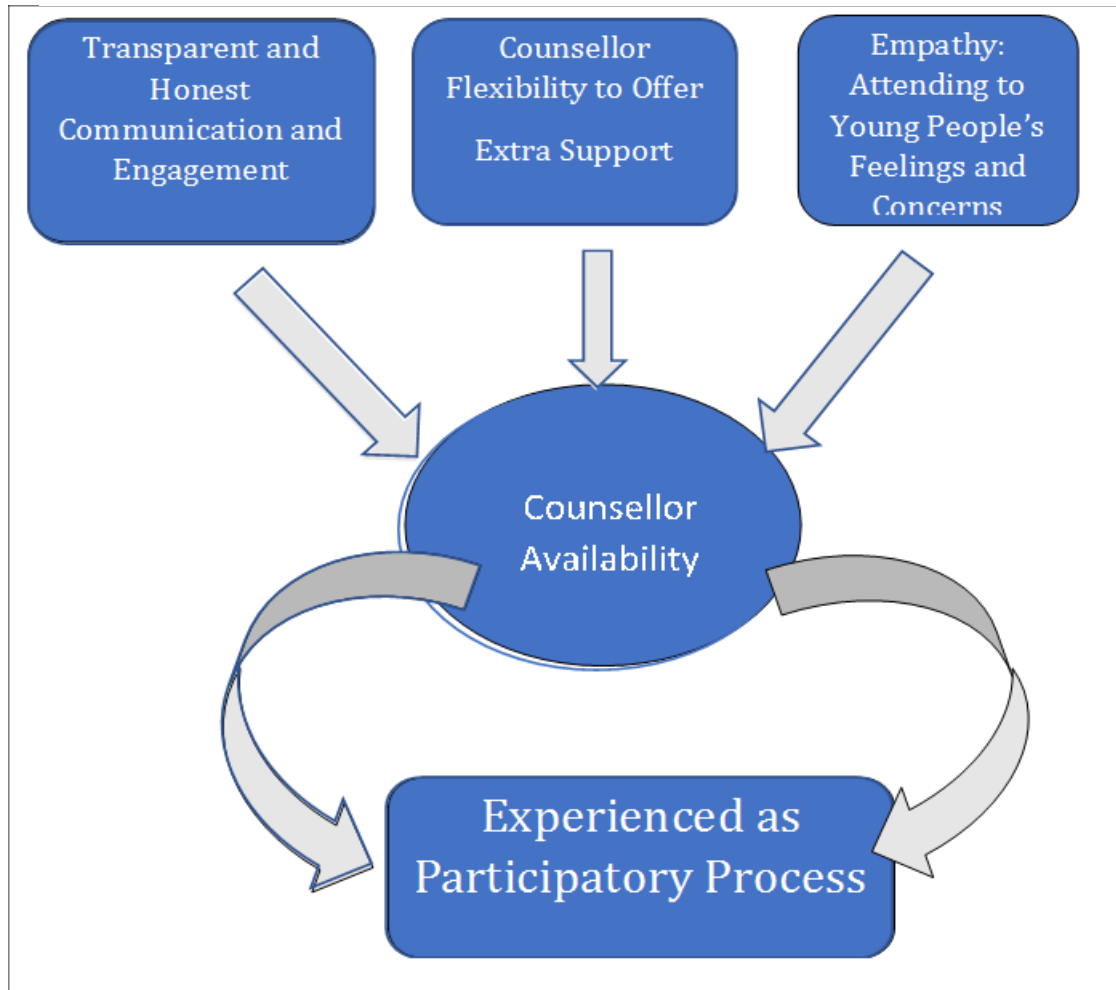
Most counsellors and DSLs expressed their own feelings of disempowerment about safeguarding processes. These feelings paralleled those of the young people. There was some

concern from counsellors about the impact of institutional anxiety and defensive practice on therapeutic relationships with young people. All counsellors outlined their belief that there were times that the young person primarily needed adults to take charge during safeguarding processes in order to reduce anxiety. There was evidence that counsellors may be misapplying ideas about containment to justify this approach. Conversely, young people suggested that taking charge and not involving them increased anxiety.

Developing a Theory of Counsellor Availability

In reflecting on the data from the thematic analysis an over-arching finding centred on counsellor *availability* during the information sharing process. How available are counsellors for young people during information sharing? Such *availability* was formulated both psychologically, by maintaining empathy and care and continuing to be centred on the young person's feelings and concerns, and practically in terms of counsellor flexibility to offer extra support such as accompanying young people during safeguarding processes. A strong feature of an 'available' counsellor was their perceived trustworthiness demonstrated by their honest and transparent communication with the young person. Honest communication and continued empathy were experienced as a participatory process that involved young people in the information sharing process. Overall, the counsellors were concerned to maintain this *availability* despite any structural constraints and ruptures.

Figure 15: School Counsellor Availability



Counsellor *availability* was connected to young people's perception of power and degree of participation in school counselling information sharing processes. *Availability* was fundamentally implicated in the degree of trust experienced in the relationship and hence the ongoing therapeutic alliance (see, Figure 15). If this thesis was designed to illuminate the practical wisdom of how to share safeguarding information whilst maintaining therapeutic alliances, continued counsellor *availability* was the participants' response. The factors that may facilitate or impair counsellor availability are further explored in Chapter 7.

The Feelings associated with Information Sharing

Although experiences varied, the thematic analysis revealed that all participants emphasised the negative feelings associated with safeguarding information sharing. Young people used

the words *stress* and *pressure* to describe a fear of exposure to shame through their experiences of being talked about by adults or being ‘gossiped’ about by other young people. All participant groups used words and phrases like *anxiety, anger, fear, guilt, horror, shame, insecurity, powerlessness, or out of control* in association with information sharing. At this stage of my data analysis, I believed there could be a relationship between counsellor *availability* and their experiences of, and opportunities for, psychological containment (Bion, 1970). My premise being that counsellors who feel more contained can access greater reflective capacity and hence maintain psychological availability for their clients during the information sharing process rather than being pre-occupied by their own feelings. These ideas acknowledge that “*when exposed to great pressure, most people tend to lose their capacity to think about the thoughts and feelings of others*” (Midgely and Vrouva, 2013:24). In Chapter 3, I discussed a body of research in safeguarding and child protection that applies psychodynamic ideas about defences to describe how people may try to detach from or avoid sources of anxiety (Freud, A., 1937, Rustin, 2005; Ferguson, 2017). These ideas suggest that professional reflection and decision-making can be affected by the strong affective responses to working with vulnerable young people (Sprince, 2000). If this is the case, illuminating the feelings about information sharing is important, as they will influence how practitioners work with young people. This capacity to think about feelings has been termed by Fonagy et al. (2004) as mentalization and has been linked to lowering arousal and affect-regulation processes. Such reflection may help them to consider the projected or counter-transferential origins of some of the anxiety that accompanies information sharing and retain a focus on the young person (Clarkson 2004; Rowan & Jacobs, 2002).

My reading of the thematic data led me to infer that there might be a connection between positive working relationships with DSLs in schools and counsellors feeling more contained and hence being more *available* for young people. Wider processes and structures also greatly affect this containment, such as clinical supervision and safeguarding management within the Place2Be. To assess this speculation, I required a fresh level of analysis to explore the contextual and subjective experiences of individual counsellors and how these might be influencing information sharing processes. To explore these factors, I needed to delve below the surface of the communications in the research data (Riessman, 2008). The subsequent psychosocially influenced narrative analysis sheds light on the implicit forces impacting individual counsellor *availability* during safeguarding processes.

Chapter 7: Narratives of Availability and Containment

Introduction

The central finding from the thematic analysis was that continued counsellor psychological and practical *availability* was experienced as a participatory process by young clients. Young people wanted counsellors to actively engage with, and maintain focus on the client, despite the powerful negative feelings that information sharing can evoke. This second stage of data analysis arose primarily from a curiosity to explore how counsellors' subjective and affective experiences might influence counsellor *availability* and hence support, or obstruct, trust in alliances. I was also curious to excavate counsellor dissonance on participatory processes as these were popular with young people and supported their perception of counsellor *availability*. Five out of six of the counsellors were concerned to support young people's participation at some point in interviews. However, all counsellors also suggested they needed or felt compelled to take charge when it came to safeguarding processes.

In Chapter 3, I discussed psychodynamic ideas about the powerful feelings and projections that working with vulnerable young people can evoke (see Clarkson, 2004; Rowan and Jacobs, 2002; Sprince, 2000). This led to a consideration of the role of professional reflective supervision and containment to prevent counsellors becoming pre-occupied and overwhelmed by their own feelings and retain cognitive capacity (Bion, 1970; Douglas, 2007; Ruch, 2014). This narrative stage of analysis drew on these ideas to focus on the relationship between counsellor psychological *availability* and their experiences of containment. Professional relationships with DSLs seemed to emerge as a central pre-occupation for counsellors. How might these professional relationships be impacting upon counsellor reflective capacity and psychological *availability*? To explore this phenomenon, I focused this analysis on three contrasting interviews with counsellors: Ada (C1), Gaby (C6) and Bethany (C2)³⁶. In Chapter 5, I detailed how I selected these counsellor narratives because of the contrasting professional relationships with their DSL and attendant affective experiences they revealed. All three participants demonstrated retrospective reflective capacities (reflection-

³⁶ See page 114 for the detail of this selection process.

on-action) during their interviews (Schön, 1983). However, their narratives revealed that both their school contexts and professional relationships with their DSLs resulted in markedly different affective experiences *during* information sharing.

In focusing on the counsellors' individual stories, I employed a broadly narrative approach. As discussed in Chapter 5, this analysis was also influenced by psychosocial ideas, which allowed me to explore below the surface and highlight how implicit forces and dialogic contexts were impacting upon the counsellor's practice (Riessman, 2008; Clarke, 2018). I also considered some of the possible purposes of the communications within interviews, and what meanings these might reveal (Mishler, 1991; Charon, 2006). Through this process, I sought to create a multi-dimensional and in-depth picture of the factors impacting individual counsellor *availability* during information sharing, informed by a relational and phronetic perspective.

'You Need to Tell that Information Desperately': Ada's Narrative

In this section, I explore counsellor Ada's description of her experience of a lack of available containment during safeguarding procedures.

Ada, previously a volunteer counsellor in another school, had recently risen to become a school project manager in a busy mixed-catchment inner-city academy secondary school. I chose Ada's narrative as it illustrated the competing stresses involved in information sharing. In the interview, I found Ada to be a reflective counsellor. This narrative account explored the pressure she experienced to follow correct procedures and how these factors combined to impact her practice with clients. Ada frequently commented on her DSL's unavailability both psychologically and practically. Borrowing ideas from attachment theory about the importance of a 'secure base' the unavailability of her DSL seemed to contribute to Ada's anxiety, leaving her with practical worries and sometimes a sense of fragmentation about carrying out her safeguarding role (Bowlby, 1969). Her narrative described how this insecure professional relationship left her anxious and isolated.

To exemplify these ideas, I have chosen five sections of narrative.

1. The physical chase to find the DSL.
2. 'I Wish I Had Two Bodies': The Binary of Safeguarding and Counselling.
3. 'Like Something Thrown-Away': Confluence between the Young Person and the Counsellor.

4. 'You Ruptured the Boundary': Information Sharing as Damage to the Alliance.
5. Distal support offered by the Place2Be structures.

In exploring these narrative themes, I reflect how her lack of containment might potentially impact her *availability* for her client.

The Chase

Ada described the stress and anxiety that comes into play when she realises that a young person has disclosed something that will need to be passed on. She depicted the support on offer in her current school as '*unreliable*'. She described chasing around the school to find the safeguarding officer and contrasted it with a former school where the DSL was in the next-door office. This highlighted the DSL's physical *unavailability*. She talked about the stress of information sharing situations and the anxiety they evoke was, I believe, illustrated in the fragmentation of her sentence structure. Many sentences were broken off midway, as she described trying to seek out her DSL. I set out this section of her transcript in a way that evokes the units of discourse and meaning in her interview to reflect this fragmentation (Gee, 1991). Ada was aware of my previous role as a school counsellor and there were elements of dramatization where she used reported speech to represent her own thought processes to engage me, perhaps making a plea for commonality and sympathy for her situation (Riessman, 2008). This was her response to me asking about what safeguarding was like in her school.

*When you have to pass on information anyway and
the child comes to you the last period of the school on a Friday
you know the child cannot go home and you have got a child in your room
You need to tell that information desperately
and the CPO is off site I have had cases where the CPO was offsite
and the second person is there but they are unfound.
It's quite a stressful situation [nervous laugh] I think
Because you are holding the child [.] what the child has told you [.]
their anxiety and you're holding your professional training kind of*

'I need to tell someone' – 'You need to keep this safe...'

The fragmentation of this communication also revealed a strong sense of breathlessness and perhaps powerlessness through this endeavour. She vacillated between portraying herself as a somewhat thwarted hero, to the victim or vulnerable child. The phrase 'unfounded' led me to reflect in my research journal how it reminded me of a child that has got lost and races around in a desperate search for her parents. In Bick's (1968: 187) work on infant observation she described *'the need for a containing object would seem, in the infantile unintegrated state, to produce a frantic search for an object... [that can hold] the parts of the personality together'*. Ada's description of her need to pass on the information to 'do her job' was also a need for containment of her anxiety before she leaves for the weekend. There may be something critical in the physical *unavailability* of the DSL as illustrated below.

If you share an office with a CPO [DSL] or if the line manager's right across the corridor you can— physically get their support and you know who's around.

But if you are isolated if you are somewhere else it can feel emotionally and physically isolating

you can't reach, there is a barrier...

I considered this passage through Bion's (1970) ideas about containment and what this might illuminate about Ada's subjective experiences during information-sharing. Bion highlighted the role of maternal 'reverie' in digesting and making sense of the unbearable sensations of the infant, which is then reflected back to the child on repeated occasions. This experience of metabolising the child's chaotic feelings and mirroring them back in a more digested and hence bearable form helps the child to be able to think about their feelings and experiences (Garland, 2002). Latterly, this capacity to think about feelings has been termed by Fonagy et al., (2004) as mentalisation and is formulated as fundamentally implicated in affect-regulation processes. Without the experience of the containment that the reverie and attuned care-giving brings, it is difficult for the infant to make sense of her experiences and sensations. Without the sense of integration that can arise through the continual re-experiencing of this process it has been suggested that the self itself can feel fragmented and thinking can be impaired (Bion, 1970; Garland, 2002). Ada's ability to think and reflect during and after the disclosure may have been impacted by the stress induced by these situations and a lack of proximal containment in her school. Ada seemed pre-occupied by the anxiety about passing on her

concern and simultaneously pre-occupied by the additional anxiety to follow both school and Place2Be protocols. She described being left with a surfeit of anxious feelings without any immediate opportunity to offload her concerns. The effort required to contain these feelings within her, seemed to bring about a temporary absence of reflective space. This contrasted with my impression of Ada as a reflective therapist who thought about the meaning and origin of her feelings. However, when she described information sharing processes they seemed anxiety-driven and frantic.

*Parallel procedures it kicks off at the same time after disclosure [.]
but often because of space issues the child is in the room with you.
You can't keep them safe somewhere and go off
and try to find someone.
You can't leave the room you have to phone-
need to chase the people in the school
while keeping one eye on the child*

In the moment of trying to pass on information, she is absorbed by the need to follow school and Place2Be safeguarding procedures. She reported how these parallel procedures 'kick-off' after the disclosure. Reflecting on the phrase 'kick-off' I noticed its association with confrontations and wondered whether this conveyed something of the experience of safeguarding for Ada. She again emphasised the insecurity of her relationship with her DSL and how she often could not find her. It seemed difficult for Ada to reflect on, and therefore derive meaning from her own anxious feelings *as* she experienced them. This temporary block in awareness seemed to leave Ada full of emotions and lacking in reflective space. The pre-occupation with procedure seemed to make Ada less available to the concerns of her clients and actively communicating with them. This echoed social work studies about the bureaucratisation of child protection practices described in Chapter 3 (Parton, 2006; Munro, 2011). Anxious messages and powerful discourses about risk and the imperative to 'get it right' may coalesce and be reinforced by a process of governmentality (or the power of discourses to promote self-editing behaviour) resulting in an over concentration on the protocol and a resulting loss of focus on young people (Foucault, 1979). For Foucault, this subtle disciplinary form of bio-power happens through relational processes and works to internalise the "gaze" of external social structures. O'Grady (2005) suggests that the sanctions against obeying these discourses can be shame and humiliation. This raised the question as to

whether Ada's desire to avoid the professional shame of being seen to 'get it wrong' was also a source of pre-occupation and potential un/availability.

The anxiety about following protocols may be at the expense of relating and communicating directly and honestly with children and listening to their views (Rustin, 2005; Parton, 2014; Ferguson, 2017).

'I Wish I Had Two Bodies': The Binary of Safeguarding and Counselling

Ada vividly described her desire to be physically and emotionally available for her client, yet she acknowledged her head was full of protocol, and she worried about '*messing up*'. Was a culture of procedural conformity resulting in her feeling fearful of 'getting it wrong' to avoid professional and personal shame? Furthermore, was she prioritising the aspects of her role most visible to, and monitored by management, such as completing bureaucracy (O'Grady, 2005). Ada described wanting to 'hold' her client, which, although expressed physically, seemed to symbolise the dual desire to emotionally contain the young person's anxiety (psychological *availability*) as well as maintain her physical presence (physical *availability*). Yet Ada emphasised that safeguarding processes required her to go off and '*do the safeguarding*' despite her expressed desire to be present alongside her client. This seemed to acknowledge that she had detached from the client to meet the demands of adult processes. Ada used reported speech to relate her own internalised imperatives to follow correct procedure, perhaps to intensify my engagement with her situation (Wolfson, 2011).

... See you got to... you want to... be there physically and hold them you know

just re-assure them that they did the right thing and things like that

but at the same time, you've got this other voice in your head

'Oh — okay, I need to follow these steps now. I need to not only tell the DSL in the school

but I have to—but alongside that I have to inform Place2Be

because they have their own procedure and if you mess up

either way you didn't do your role as a project manager

and you might not have kept the child safe...'

And I want to be there a hundred percent for them

and I wish I had two bodies one that could sit there with them

and the other part of me has gone off to kind of to safeguard and do those steps.

Here, Ada described her dilemmas over wanting to continue to be *available* for her client yet needing to follow correct safeguarding procedure. These two purposes are expressed as a binary. To fulfil her 'role' as project manager her priority was to obey the internalisations in her head to attend to the demands of safeguarding protocols. By following the steps required of her, she inferred that she became *unavailable* to the young person. She seemed to cast herself as a thwarted hero whose quest became impossibly confused by competing tasks. This section was reminiscent of Hillman's (1977) adaptation of Jungian ideas about internal dialogues as archetypal. This dialogical self not only represents sub-personalities, but also illuminate individuals' competing values (Hermans, 2002). Thus, by illuminating different views of dialogical sub-personalities, one may perceive the forces of internal deliberation and decision-making. There was little material in Ada's interview that dealt directly with how she communicates with young people about their concerns. The focus of her anxiety here was on adult processes despite her ability to reflect in retrospect on the impact on the young person's feelings and the therapeutic alliance.

You are aware of the relationship

you are aware of the child and the further it goes out

it gets—lost that special bond.

The place that created the ability to talk about something like that.

Above, Ada confided in me her belief about how information sharing dilutes the therapeutic alliance with the young person. Ada emphasised that it is the bond, which facilitates the disclosure process. There was a dual sense of both something not being held with the idea that by passing on the information she was 'doing her job'. The wish to have two bodies, perhaps best represented something of this duality. My reflection on this section was that it is as if Ada was suggesting that the two roles are on an electric circuit switch, where to 'do the safeguarding' required her to switch off her therapeutic alliance role. Ada seemed to perceive the safeguarding role as the dominant imperative rather than it being framed as a co-current interdependent part of working therapeutically with young people. Thus, Ada wanted to be two people: one a counsellor who was *available* to be the container for her client's difficult

feelings and another person whose job it was to ‘do the safeguarding’. Ada seemed to see these functions as incompatible which caused her to offer herself reassurance to mediate the inner tension this provoked. She reassured herself with phrases such as ‘*And the child is now in a safe place*’ and other times she comforted herself that she has done her ‘*job*’ before she went home. Yet on her return to school, her anxiety is evident again as she sought to find out the results of sharing her concerns.

‘Like Something Thrown-Away’: Confluence between the Young Person and the Counsellor

Within Ada’s narrative, the boundaries between her description of her own feelings and those of the young people are continually blurred. She seemed to oscillate between presenting herself as the hard-pressed hero, to being vulnerable herself in a way that is reminiscent of the victim and rescuer from the Karpman drama triangle (1968). When asked about her feelings Ada initially deflected the question and imagined her client’s feelings. As the account developed, she swapped over and focused on her own subjective experience. There was a continual back and forth between her own experiences and that of the young person. This confluence (or merging of feelings) was often seen through the expression of Ada feeling powerless, out of control, dis-regarded or unimportant (Clarkson and Cavicchia, 2013).

T: What did that feel like?

*A: Oh gosh – [...] yeah — I go back to the child how is that child feeling.
They tell someone they trust something — and they are now watched by police
and they don’t know what’s going on and what’s going to happen to me?
What’s going to happen to mum or dad?
And it’s a Friday –and I’m not going to see them.
Depending on your days if you might not see them
for five days you carry that with you.
You leave the school because you can’t stay forever.
Maybe 5 o’clock okay done—I’ve done as much as I can
and the child is now in a safe place[.]
you have established that they are with someone safe.
But then I have had experiences where I carry that home.
I had a good old cry in the room and let myself release that....*

done my weekend...

When I come back the next time round to the school

It could be five days after, for example.

Ok, what's going on? You email. Can you please update me?

That doesn't happen often either

So, you are also left wondering 'What went on?'

Ada's experience of not knowing what happened when she returned to school after the weekend mirrored the uncertainty she described the young person experiencing. Considering ideas around reactive countertransference here, she may have experienced her client's projected feelings (Jacobs and Rowan, 2002). The description of her crying by herself before she left the building is a poignant illustration of the uncontained anxiety and stress she is carrying at that point. Her account seemed to reveal a lack of sufficient 'proximal' containment. After finding the safeguarding officer and passing on the information, there was still a sense of disempowerment. Ada presented herself as feeling as if she had little power to influence the outcome, or even be informed about what any subsequent actions. She may have embodied the powerlessness of the young person during the adult task of sharing her concern. Another interpretation might also be to consider the influence of her 'proactive countertransference' which might include a consideration of Ada's object-relations history on her experiences (Lowe, 2016; Rowan and Jacobs, 2002). This might have caused her to feel like she may have herself felt, as a child. This in turn could also have contributed to her feeling powerless during safeguarding. Her account suggested that, during the information sharing process itself, she seemed to have little awareness of the possible impact of her clients' affective experiences on her feelings (*reflection-in-action*), although she identified this process in retrospect (*reflection on action*) (Schön, 1983, 1987). Later, she named this as (reactive) countertransference and how she was left holding the child's anxiety. It seemed as if Ada's internal supervisor went offline during the stress of safeguarding, as it happened (Casement, 2013). This could suggest that she has not experienced enough prior mentalisation, or containment herself in her professional role (Bion, 1970; Fonagy et al., 2004).

Another example of confluence between young person and counsellor's feelings emerged when Ada described passing on a concern that was not deemed sufficiently worrying by the DSL to act upon.

I remember feeling—not insulted—not rejected

*—but like something thrown away
not taken seriously and I think that is how the children feel.*

Ada was clearly aware in retrospect, of the link between the felt experience of the young person, and her own feelings. She traced this process of confluence between her client's feelings and her own later in the interview as 'the feelings which get jumbled up with the professional side' (Clarkson and Cavicchia, 2013). Ada's narrative revealed that her affective state is intensified by not feeling taken seriously herself by the DSL. For Ada, there appeared to be a lack of mutuality, or reciprocity in this critical professional relationship (Douglas, 2007). Reciprocity has been depicted as communication as co-constructed in an interplay between parent and child (Brazelton, 1979). Bion's (1970) ideas suggest containment in infancy is fundamentally linked to the development of a sense of identity and self-hood. Hence, not feeling contained and acknowledged when experiencing strong or chaotic feelings as a child can feel like a potential annihilation. There was, perhaps, a flavour of such annihilation when Ada described feeling like '*something thrown away*'.

'You Ruptured the Boundary': Information Sharing as Damage to the Alliance

A binary about doing 'safeguarding' versus doing 'the therapeutic alliance' was further illuminated when Ada described how relationships can be ruptured after sharing information.

*Yes—you ruptured the boundary and it might potentially also be about repair.
You went beyond the counselling relationship and that's a rupture
and it's how you then repair it.
Not everyone has good repair experience with an adult.
She might completely be mad at me and refuse to come to any session after.
I would want to try to sensitively—I don't know
It's how you then rebuild that and sometimes that can be such a great outcome.*

Ada's emphasised the therapeutic opportunities in repairing the rupture in the alliance with the young person. She commented on her belief in the value of young people expressing their anger to her. Here, she may have applied growing a body of work which sets out the importance of ideas about rupture and repair and child development. Siegel (2001) suggests how micro-ruptures in attunement in relationships with care givers help children to learn to tolerate and manage challenging feelings providing there is sufficient opportunities for subsequent repair. Schore (2003aa, 2008) writing in the field of developmental neurobiology

suggests that the process of repair turns despair into joy through the secretion of dopamine and endogenous opiates, promoting synaptic growth in the pre-frontal limbic regions of the right brain where infants develop the capacity for self-regulation. These ideas interconnected with psychodynamic ideas from Kohut (1984) about the role of empathic failures and their repair and how these lead to internalisations that result in personality growth. Such concepts are embedded in the therapeutic approach and training of the Place2Be and are developed through their initial training and continuing professional development for counsellors (Place2Be, 2018). Applying these concepts to the therapeutic alliance suggests that ruptures and subsequent repairs are an opportunity to strengthen the confidence in the bond and help develop affect regulation in clients. I was curious about how these theories are being applied to information sharing situations by counsellors. Ada seemed to imply that safeguarding required her to *switch off* her focus on the relationship

*And whatever happens after—what-ever reaction it is
then that's [emphasis] the relationship
how you then manage therapeutically.
They can be angry with me and you can explore that.*

Ada seemed to frame 'rupture' in the alliance as inevitable when information is shared. Are ideas about the value of infant 'rupture and repair' being used to suggest that young people getting angry about information sharing is ultimately helpful to the therapeutic process? This raises questions about whether such ruptures ultimately strengthen or undermine trust in the relationship. Or could it be the case that with careful management and transparent communication, ruptures with young people could be avoided? The young people themselves in the study were divided on the impact of information sharing with some saying that they will *'thank the counsellor later'* for getting help and others suggesting that it would result in there being *'no trust what-so-ever'*. They also talked about how if the young person returns to counselling *'that there is enough trust there'*. However, the degree of 'rupture' in the alliance matters and some ruptures may be too fundamental to be easily repaired. Most counsellors expressed discomfort about the potential 'breaking' of relationships at some point, rather than having confidence that it would ultimately strengthen alliances. This disjuncture left me with questions about whether the ideas about 'rupture and repair' are being used to reassure counsellors who feel uneasy about the impact of some safeguarding processes on alliances. There is a danger here, that the therapeutic opportunities of working alongside young people in an *available* and participatory way are being over-shadowed.

Distal Support

I asked Ada, who supported her through safeguarding processes, and she responded with a reiteration of how unreliable and ‘unresponsive’ the school was and an assertion that the Place2Be was her main support. This again is resonant of ideas from attachment theory about the impact of unresponsive parenting on levels of security and anxiety (Bowlby 1969). Despite this resonance, I also believed her experience of inter-professional unresponsiveness was true at a practical level. She named her clinical supervisor as her first line of support but commented that she might not be immediately available during safeguarding processes. Her responses reflected a dual focus on whether she can practically access the support and whether this support is responsive. This parallels the dual focus on the psychological and practical *availability* of counsellors for young people. When asked specifically about support, Ada was still pre-occupied with positioning herself as conforming to correct protocol. There was, perhaps, an awareness of the possible audience of the Place2Be management at this point.

*A: My experience is the school can be unreliable
I don't get support –it's the Place2Be.
So, when there is a disclosure and I have the first moment
I will write it down verbatim and I'll file a CP form and I'll call my Supervisor.
... I can that's always there— though you might not get that person.
If you think it's a really big concern:
I'll call the Office and go straight to the CP admin.*

The phrasing here once again inferred that her safeguarding role not only overrode the therapeutic work— but perhaps in her view, necessarily disconnected it. Availability and responsiveness of the DSL therefore become critical to her anxiety about completing her task. What might this situation look like if the relationship with the DSL were more reciprocal? I now move on to explore the narrative of another counsellor, Gaby.

“Okay, Let's Think this Through” Gaby's Experience of Containment

Gaby was an accredited counsellor working in a large inner-city mixed comprehensive school in an area of deprivation. She described her training as ‘*very psychodynamic*’ but that she now

takes an integrative approach to therapeutic work with young people. Gaby seemed centred on a ‘relationship-centred’ approach. This was perhaps embodied in the warm welcome she offered to me as a guest researcher. During my interview with Gaby, I was aware that there was a certain ‘meeting of minds’ between us in terms of our joint interest in participatory approaches with young people. This caused me to reflect not only on my role in co-constructing Gaby’s narrative, but also on her role in performing an approach to working with young people that she might have believed I approved of. This may of course have been a factor in her volunteering to take part in this research. This narrative analysis looked beneath her account to explore *how* Gaby related her experiences, which also revealed areas of dissonance and discomfort. Overall, her interview seemed to reveal a more secure, less anxious experience during information sharing processes. Gaby described the safeguarding in her current secondary project as positive and pinpointed the relationship with the DSL (Harriet DSL 2) as the main element of this. Gaby’s more reciprocal relationship with her safeguarding lead seemed to allow her to retain greater reflective capacities and a greater focus on the young person. However, she also expressed frustration with what she described as ‘*anxiety driven practice*’ and how it emerged as a source of tension and control in her narrative.

Gaby’s Relationship with her Safeguarding Lead

Gaby seemed concerned to represent her counselling service as joined up and functional. Gaby highlighted the availability of the DSL and the non-reactiveness (calmness) and the mutuality of their relationship. She traced the ‘open-door’ policy of her DSL and feeling listened to and validated. Her narratives revealed a sense of greater calm during safeguarding. This is how Gaby responded to my opening question about what her experience of safeguarding was like in her school³⁷.

This one here it’s great actually—for safeguarding issues because the person who is my designated link in the school is also the child protection officer [DSL] [right] and she’s very available so she has a very welcoming open-door policy—she is pretty generally available. Unless she is out of school or tied up with stuff. You can usually get hold of

³⁷ This was the same opening question that prompted Ada to describe her chase to find her DSL. See page 166 to compare these responses.

her... [DSL name] is very available and she— my experience of the staff here is that they are very thoughtful about receiving information. So I haven't had a sense of big reactive thing going on [laughs] when information is shared and generally [...] quite a thoughtful "okay let's think this through" kind of response

Gaby reiterated the impact on her of the approach taken by her DSL later in the interview.

So that is helpful in itself and knowing that more likely than not going to be able to get hold of the right person on the day so not taking it home and really like [...] to have passed that on.

Gaby's description suggested that she felt more contained by the accessibility and reflectiveness of her DSL. I noticed her confidence that she will be able to talk to her DSL and they will react in a calm and thoughtful way. The secureness of the relationship with the DSL was borne out by Gaby's language and talking style. She talked in a relaxed, slow and thoughtful way that contrasted to Ada's more breathless style. Although, this might have been an indication of a different interpersonal style. Gaby reflected that her relationship with her DSL meant that she was not going to have to take anxiety home. Applying object relations ideas about containment to Gaby's situation, the 'measured' and 'thoughtful' response that she experienced could be described as a holding environment in which the worries about the young person can be heard and jointly reflected upon and processed (Bion, 1970; Winnicott 1965a). The result of this multi-professional co-reflection seemed to be a calmer affective experience of information sharing.

Gaby's description of the processes is also borne out by her DSL Harriet's description of her own practice in her interview. Here Harriet reflects on her own need to be available for Gaby and her concern that she does not 'go home' with the worry.

Harriet (DSL2): So when she comes I do make time for her—no matter what I am doing [...] not so much drop everything [...] just make sure there is time pretty soon after she has come... she needs to feel that she can go home and not worry about what has happened—she is a person as well—you know.

Gaby's narrative suggested that this mutual and reflective relationship with her DSL allowed her to process and contain her anxiety. She later described how this measured and reflective response helped her to avoid contributing to the anxiety surrounding the young person. This may have left her more emotionally *available* in the ongoing relationship with her client. This

availability may have supported her capacity to mentalise her clients' emotional states during information sharing (Fonagy et al., 2004). It was noticeable that Gaby's interview transcript contained markedly fewer feeling words compared to Ada³⁸.

Supervision and Peer Support

Gaby also reflected how clinical supervision played a central role in helping her to reflect on the meaning of projected feelings she may experience during information sharing (Emanuel, 2002). The extract below was a response to me asking her about what and who influenced her practice. She was concerned to frame this account as from early in her career.

Gaby: I do remember a supervision session I had around information sharing dilemmas-type situation where the young person had not [...] felt good about the sharing information. Not so much that she didn't feel good about the sharing, but about what happened next she didn't feel good about [laughs] which was the angry reaction from her family errm and I do remember talking to my supervisor about that one because that was quite early in practice and I was really worried that it had trashed the relationship and that she will not come back...I felt really guilty and really stuck [...]

Gaby described how supervision helped her to reflect on her feelings of guilt and how this reaction may have originated in the experiences of her client. She seemed to ascribe them as reactive countertransference (Clarkson, 2004; Jacobs, 2004). This supervision allowed Gaby to disentangle her feelings from those powerful feelings being experienced by her client and prevented confluence. This is regarded as a critical function of supervision, especially in working with children and young people who are vulnerable, where projections can promote feelings of powerlessness in the counsellor (Emanuel, 2002). In contrast to Ada's experience, there was a clearer delineation between Gaby's feelings and those of her client. She also emphasised how supervision helped her to establish what emotions might be originating from her own professional experiences.

This section also separately illuminated how actions taken *outside* of counselling sessions as the result of information sharing, can potentially impact on trust *within* the counselling relationship. Gaby discussed the contrast between young people who make disclosures

³⁸ See Appendix C.

because they want something to be different, and those young people who seemed unaware about the implications of what they have shared, and where *'something has grown arms and legs and they haven't seen that happening'*.

Gaby also emphasised the support she gets from other school counsellors whom she can *'pick up the phone to'*.

Yeah, yeah we have team meetings every three weeks, but informally you might be in touch anyway and it's definitely okay to pick up afterwards— phone and offload to somebody [laughs] so that's helpful.

Such informal peer supervision was described as a source of non-judgmental help and advice. I noticed the laugh that accompanied this statement and wondered in my research journal about its significance and whether it denoted a leaking of a sense of anxiety about the perceived 'naughtiness' of potentially being outside of official structures. Although, these peer-to-peer supervision encounters happen off-screen in terms of this study, they may be zones where school counsellors feel safe-enough (outside of official structures) to name difficulty and 'not-knowing'. This led me to consider if in peer conversations it is more permissible to name information sharing as a 'dilemma' that requires active decision-making. They may be 'buffer zones' that protect from the anxiety about 'getting it wrong'. The supportive role of peer supervision was confirmed by all the other counsellor participants and its non-hierarchical, non-managerial and ad-hoc nature seemed to be a key factor in its perceived value. These collegial exchanges were a significant extra source of containment for the counsellors across this study.

The Available Counsellor

Gaby's interview stood out in terms of the emphasis she placed on her *availability* for young people during safeguarding. Gaby described her concern was to stay connected with how the young person felt about the information being passed on and be transparent about the limits of confidentiality and honest about next steps. She sought to engage with the young person about how they should expect to be treated. She emphasised her desire to maintain the therapeutic alliance. This included an emphasis on facilitating young people's empowerment through safeguarding processes. She also emphasised young people's individual autonomy and competencies.

Gaby (C6): I think it's about trying to allow young people to have as much responsibility and authority as they can—for what is happening in their lives....

Gaby went on to explain how she envisaged the continuing role of the relationship through information-sharing processes.

And that stuff I was saying about trying to empower them in the information sharing process... one of things ...about what influences my practice there is my personal beliefs about young people and what are they capable of and what they have rights to. ... And more generally than that – 'I want to hear what you think—we are in a relationship and it is important how you feel about this'

Gaby's description allowed young people to have agency rather than be formulated as 'objects of concern' (Munro, 2011). Her narrative suggested that she felt less anxious and was more able to be reflective during the information sharing process herself. This was Gaby's description of how she would work with the fictional Lucy. Through examining her imagined response —she seemed to retain a focus on Lucy's concerns.

Well, I suppose... the next bit is about Lucy's worry about her mum getting into trouble—that's the stuff I was saying before about—it's not gonna be about mum getting into trouble. But it does seem things are very hard so maybe there are people that can try and help and doesn't need to be all Lucy's responsibility to look after this and I am glad that she's been able to share it. Because it sounds like it's been quite hard for her to try and look after everybody else in that.

Although, it was difficult to establish what would happen in real practice, Gaby's narrative did imply that she was more able to use reflexivity during her interactions with young people as well as 'reflection on action' during her clinical supervision (Schön, 1983). She seemed to retain her ability to mentalise her client's emotional state (Fonagy et al., 2004). There was less pre-occupation and anxiety about 'getting it right' in terms of protocol. Her interview revealed a concern to create reciprocity in her engagement with the young person and perhaps retain an '*I thou*' mutual position (Buber, 1971; Brazelton *et al.*, 1979). The creation of this mutual space seemed to mirror the response she described experiencing with her safeguarding officer, Harriet.

Gaby was concerned to stay engaged with the young person about the nature of the safeguarding concern; she talked about the process of ‘un-normalising’ or re-framing young people’s experience as ‘not okay’.

Yeah [...] I suppose the informing and educating bit is about what happens in the future to them, I suppose, and what they are going to take into adulthood with them about what’s okay and what is normal. And what should I expect from other people and what can I expect to be responsible for.

Gaby’s account suggested that the relational environment at her school allowed her to offload her concerns about a young client in a timely manner. She emphasised her confidence that her safeguarding officer would make herself available, listen to her concerns and respond in a reflective and collegial way. This proximal interprofessional relationship seemed to support Gaby’s capacity to reflect, think and be available for her clients. This formulation is further supported by evidence from one of the young people’s groups that was based in Gaby’s school. Here the young people themselves described what happens during safeguarding processes in Gaby’s project school.

Sian (YP1): I mean a lot—like here—the Place2Be people when you go and talk to them they take it slowly and they help you.

Anxiety and Defensive Practice

As the interview progressed, Gaby described her view of the ‘*anxious messages*’ contained within safeguarding training. She described the fear of ‘*getting it wrong*’ from the organisation’s point of view as a ‘*red herring*’ that can distract from a meaningful focus on the young person. Psychoanalytic ideas from Klein describe the complex processes that arise in organisations that work with vulnerable people to defend against the anxiety and the risks involved (See Menzies-Lyth 1992; Stein, 2000; De Board, 2014). Gaby suggested that institutional anxiety can result in a lack of containment for counsellors and a loss of focus on the young person and their needs and concerns. Child protection research has established that the inability of organisations to contain anxiety about risk can be passed down to frontline workers in such a way that can result in the prevalence of defensive practice (Ruch, 2005; Munro, 2011). Gaby went on to discuss working with a young woman with depression where her manager directed her pass on a concern about feelings of hopelessness to the client’s mother. Gaby described how she felt that this information sharing was pre-emptive and had

damaged the trust with this client, who had failed to attend subsequent counselling sessions. This action seemed to contradict her own phronetic judgement of what was best to do with this client.

Gaby: Because it bothers me that sometimes [...] practice is defensive, practice is influenced by anxiety about getting it wrong [MMM] and that can be really distracting from thinking about the young person in the centre of it. So I have had a situation...—she didn't even make a direct disclosure about suicidal feelings but she hinted about suicidal feelings and maybe ideation as well.... And I had a conversation with—one of my managers [...] [Laughs] and the outcome of that was that actually the safest thing to do was going to be to let mum know— that this is around for her and I think, yeah— procedurally that is the right thing to do but she didn't come last week and she might not come today [laughs]...

I wondered about the laugh that accompanied her description of this situation and whether it might have denoted some tension about telling me about her concerns about this course of action (Ramachandran, 1998). At this point, I felt that Gaby was confiding in me her discomfort about the timing and manner of this information sharing. However, I reflexively acknowledge my interpretation may also have arisen from my own responses to her scenario.

I later asked her if there were any elements of the information processes that she would like to change, and she again referred to this situation and implied that she was acting in this situation against her own professional judgement. She went on to formulate her belief about the impact of institutional anxiety and how sometimes it feels *'it's about safety for the organisation [hh] Not safety for the young person...'*. My reflection on this section was that she seemed to stop herself from acknowledging that the worry was also for herself as a professional, were harm to come to a client. This was also accompanied by a laugh, which might denote tension about sharing her views (Ramachandran, 1998). She suggested anxiety within the organisation results in insufficient containment for practitioners.

Gaby: So it's something about having somewhere to put that anxiety [laughs] in the system in such a way as it doesn't become all about what if I get this wrong and something terrible happens and what would that mean for my organisation or what would that mean for...

The phenomenon of institutional anxiety about risk within child protection social work has been well established (Fellowes, 2012). The increasing emphasis on bureaucracy has been identified as a factor that may unintentionally undermine effective communication and trusting relationships with young people (Munro, 2009; Ruch, 2013). The counsellor narratives seemed to reveal that these processes may also be operating within non-statutory school counselling contexts. Later, Gaby became worried about raising her frustrations with institutional anxiety and she seemed to disown the validity of her views.

But short of having a crystal ball because we are not going to get one—I don't really know what you could do to change in the system.

However, she later returned to this topic and shared her belief about how the procedural requirements of safeguarding can eclipse a focus on the relationship with the young person.

... It's about not getting pulled into the place of 'oh, what's the procedure thing I have to do [yeah] but trying to keep the relational part at the centre of it and these are the things that will help with that. [Inaudible]

Gaby suggested the concentration on adult processes may result in a loss of focus on the young person. Yet my sense of engaging with this data was that it did not feel completely permissible for Gaby to be expressing these views. As raised earlier, there seemed a 'meeting of minds' between Gaby and me about the value of young people's participation in safeguarding processes. This may have influenced the development of her data in that she may have said this to 'please me' in the research process. However, my interpretation was that it felt permissible to share her views with me though she was worried about how the Place2Be as a potential audience might view her ideas, were she to become identifiable. Gaby was one of two counsellor participants who on being given the opportunity to read her transcript, decided to redact some background elements that she felt might make her more identifiable.

In my contact with Gaby after fieldwork she talked about enjoying taking part in the research and being stimulated by it, but also finding it stressful because safeguarding provokes anxiety and 'you want to get it right'. My reading of her data revealed dissonance through her narratives that centred around a tension between wanting to empower young people and acknowledge their competencies, with an assertion that at points it is important to 'take up adult authority' and tell them, rather than negotiate with them about what is going to happen

next. In one sense, this polarity accurately represents the complex reality of the variety of child protection situations with clients of differing ages, in different contexts, with differing needs and level of risk etc. On the other hand, it is possible that subjecting this narrative to this level of analysis reveals how practitioners such as Gaby may be attempting to juggle their ethical and phronetic judgements about the needs of their client's and their relationships with them, with the perceived requirements of safeguarding policy. The dissonances in Gaby's transcript may reveal her attempts to perform both, as the participatory practitioner and also, the efficient and 'on-script' Place2Be Practice Manager in terms of safeguarding practice.

Confusing Adult Authority and Containment

Despite Gaby's concern to empower young clients, in common with the other counsellor participants of this study, she seemed to associate the use of adult authority and decision-making to ideas about 'containment'. In the counsellor interviews 'containment' seemed to be associated with a range of ideas including protecting young people, adults taking responsibility for decision-making and taking charge in safeguarding processes. There were also assumptions that accompanied these meanings. These included that taking control was the safest way of acting, that this would ultimately lower the anxiety of the young client and finally that the counsellor had little or no choice but to proceed in this manner. There was a strong resonance with what could be regarded as a 'best interest' approach that assumes 'adults-know-best' and potentially obscures young people's concerns, feelings and competencies and complex processes surrounding around disclosures (Stainton-Rogers, 2009; Daniels and Jenkins, 2010). Such an approach inevitably involves potential frustration for the young person. This is also resonant of previous findings (Jenkins 2010; Jenkins and Palmer, 2012) on the assumption of mandatory reporting of child abuse amongst counsellors working in school contexts. In contrast, the young people suggested that lower anxiety came about through working alongside them, continuing to engage with them and taking their views into account, even where the counsellor was not able to act in accordance with them.

Below, I had asked Gaby, how she would proceed with the fictional Lucy if after having tried to work on reframing her home situation and of convincing her that she is entitled to better care and treatment, she was still unwilling to consent to information sharing.

...and actually and actually having a conversation about what you want to be involved in and what you want to happen next—those open-ended questions were not helpful to her. She was just really pissed off with me [yeah] [laughs] I'm worried about it. So actually the most containing thing to do was to say "Bell is going—do you think like you can go back to your class? You go to your class—I'll talk to Mrs [CPO] and we will take it from there and don't worry. [Laughs]

It could be argued that this type of formulation of containment is more resonant of Winnicott's (1965a) ideas about developing infants' needs for 'protected space' with a parent figure where they can develop safe from the dangers of the outside world. Steckley (2010) noted the mis/use of theories of containment in association with physically constraining young people in residential care settings. The theoretical understanding of containment associated with Bion i.e. the value of reflective empathy in processing chaotic feelings, lowering arousal and thereby making feelings more manageable—allowing them to be thought about and therefore bearable; seemed to be being obscured in this practice discourse (Bion 1971; Holliday 2014). Containment was confusingly applied in that Gaby and other counsellors seemed to both suggest that adults taking control in safeguarding helps lower anxiety, but also causes upset, anger and ruptures in the therapeutic alliance.

Yeah, yeah [...] and really kind of name that what I did there when I picked up my adult responsibility might not have been what you wanted. That's what needed to happen [yeah yeah]

Gaby despite her concerns to remain available and emphasis on empowering young people also used the word 'containment' to license adult authority and decision-making. This theme will be further developed in Bethany's narrative account below.

'Do You Have to Tell Me Now?' Performing and Ambivalence

Bethany worked as a school practice manager in a large all-through school in an inner city area of deprivation. She described how she used to work for Mind in adult mental health and for a voluntary sector young person's counselling service. She contrasted these roles with her full-time post as a Place2Be practice manager/school counsellor. The meaning of this contrast seemed to emerge through the interview as being associated with a lower degree of confidentiality offered to young clients and the frequency of safeguarding information

sharing. She attributed this difference to working within both school and Place2Be safeguarding structures. Bethany talked quietly and slowly and seemed to consider her responses carefully. Her initial concern at the beginning of the interview was to check that she had the Place2Be's permission to talk to me. She vacillated between performing as the highly competent 'on-script' counselling practice manager (perhaps for the audience of the Place2Be), to a more disaffected and cynical practitioner who expressed frustration about the impact on therapeutic alliances of some safeguarding processes. This ambivalence was characterised by a cynical resignation in her tone when she described information sharing processes that became more prevalent as the interview progressed. Bethany described her relationship with her safeguarding lead (Daisy, DSL1) as generally 'positive' but conversely, she did not seem to feel professionally empowered within this relationship, or by her association with the wider organisation. Overall, she seemed sceptical and suspicious about the support she received, particularly her opportunities for professional containment. Intriguingly, Bethany's disempowerment paralleled her lack of concern for the participation of young people in safeguarding processes.

Bethany's Relationship with her Safeguarding Officer

Bethany described her relationship with her safeguarding officer Daisy (DSL1) as 'fairly' positive and her as a 'very straightforward and matter-of-fact, reasonably kindly sort of person'. Bethany displayed confidence in how Daisy communicated and engaged with young people. This praise was set alongside a pre-occupation with Daisy's imminent departure and anxiety about who will replace her and how they might behave.

Bethany (C2): Because I trust Daisy to be sensitive and to be kind if the child has talked about something in counselling we say we talk about it with Daisy then you are thinking about that with them and what's gonna happen next. And often that's a real fear of what Daisy is going to go off and do. Often, we reassure them by 'Daisy is going to have a chat with you first and take it from there'. And that usually really calms people down.

There was trepidation about who will take over Daisy's (DSL1) role and whether they will listen to the young person or even side against them. Bethany also expressed some frustration with Daisy (DS1). Below, she described information sharing in her school as a 'one-way system' with concerns being passed on by her to the DSL but not vice-versa.

I do sometimes feel frustrated that that's a one-way system in terms of doing counselling. You don't necessarily know—historically, it is better now—you wouldn't necessarily be told... errm [...] for example I had a client after about a year or so....I was given very little information about the child apart from some concerns about friendships and academic....After a while it transpired through other circumstances that he was a known gang member in the school [...] and the school knew about this.... I sometimes feel suppose I can inform the DSL thinking but often [sigh] I feel that the DSL can't inform my thinking.

Bethany's tone of voice seemed flat and resigned. Although she described a warm relationship with her DSL and expressed confidence in her, there seemed an absence of mutual professional exchange. Bethany seemed to lack an experience of reciprocity in the working relationship between her and Daisy (DSL1). In developmental psychology, reciprocity describes how a child can influence the direction and structure of the communication (Brazelton, 1979, Douglas, 2007). It is closely associated with the later psychotherapeutic formulations of inter-subjectivity (Trevanthen and Aitken, 2001), attunement (Stern, 1985) and mutual affect regulation (Tronick and Field, 1986). During this process of interplay, the sensitivity of the parent to attune to the adaptations of the child is central to the mutuality of this communication. Jaffe et al., (2001) argued that the alternating flow of such mutual exchanges form part of the building blocks of secure attachment relationships. I have found it useful to use these ideas to consider Bethany's description of a lack of exchange with her DSL and the lack of empowerment within her narratives. As the interview progressed, Bethany went on to reveal insecurity and disempowerment in her relationship with the Place2Be. Reading below the surface, there seemed to be a resigned *following orders* approach where she used phrases such as 'You **have** to— because it's safeguarding'. There was a marked lack of expression of agency. This paralleled the lack of attention she afforded to young people's empowerment in her interview. It was difficult to determine whether her disempowered feelings were projections of young clients' feelings (reactive countertransference) or triggered by her own early experiences (proactive countertransference) or whether they resided in her current 'real-life' professional experiences (Clarkson, 2004). My subsequent conclusion was that it was likely that all three factors were at play in her data.

Frustration with her DSL emerged explicitly when she described the School and Place2Be policy of referring all self-harm to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

... nine times out of ten the child goes to CAMHS and refuses to go back. And I sort of think “do I have to tell them? Can’t I just work with them?” And that is kind of frustrating. I do because I have to—but when it’s at odds with what you think is in the best interest actually of the child [...] but the organisation policy is that, the school policies is that—if all of that was supporting—if CAMHS were there and that child was prepared to engage with them maybe that would be great. But my experience is [...] it ain’t usually like that... Sometimes Daisy says you need to persuade them and I think “No, I don’t— I don’t need to do anything of the sort!”

Here, she expressed resentment with Daisy’s instructions and a desire to resist this policy, that she believed works contrary to the young person’s best interests. Bethany seemed to feel she had to swallow her own phronetic judgement. Bethany’s description of her professional relationship with her DSL although warm, was not marked by feelings of mutuality or equality of power. Although Bethany was keen to grandstand her conformity to School and Place2Be safeguarding policy, resistance such as this was often implied throughout her data. This resistance was increasingly evident as the interview progressed.

Information sharing: performing and ambivalence

Initially, Bethany seemed concerned to perform in the interview as a good practice manager for the Place2Be. She displayed an awareness of the Place2Be as an audience for her views from the opening.

Bethany (C2). [Place2Be manager] sent your information around so I assume it’s okay to talk to you about this stuff

She went on to describe the usefulness of a three-way contracting process with young people that named Daisy (DSL1) as the person who takes care of the safety of students. She described this as a more honest approach to the relationship between confidentiality and safeguarding in counselling sessions. Bethany focused on the low thresholds for sharing young people’s information that operated within the Place2Be, which she described as ‘*the slightest whiff of anything really*’. She contrasted this approach with her former experiences working with young people outside of school contexts where she suggested it was ‘*very much the opposite*’. There were two opposing narratives running through her data. When she described Place2Be policy on information sharing and the low thresholds they operated she asserted ‘*becoming*’ very much ‘*convinced*’ of the usefulness of taking this approach. At other times, she revealed

feeling sceptical and frustrated about the potential damage to therapeutic alliances that can result.

Opposing Narratives: The Impact of Low thresholds for Information Sharing

Narrative 1- Low thresholds as protective: In the first story, Bethany described how protective she finds the low thresholds the Place2Be and school operated. The following was her reaction to my question about the impact of information sharing on the therapeutic alliance.

Bethany: For some children it affects it positively. I remember one child who disclosed something and I went through to tell Daisy... And the next session, she was really stunned because Miss had done something about it and had spoken to her mother about something and life had changed for her. She was so happy she was really, really happy.

Later, she described how she changed her views about low thresholds.

... Okay, children come to counselling can get support from that [...] but actually they are really not autonomous in many ways [...] They are so affected by what adults do around them. I really do [...] I changed my view. I think about what counselling is [...] support for the children and how big a role it can play when you have these factors in the external environment which are so difficult for them... So I think I kind of shifted.

Bethany described her conversion to believing in the value of sharing low-level safeguarding concerns (as opposed to just sharing higher-level child protection concerns) because of the perceived systemic powerlessness of children in their environment. Unlike four of the six counsellors I interviewed (and Daisy her DSL) Bethany formulated young people as wholly vulnerable throughout her interview without competencies and skills. In contrast, her DSL Daisy (DSL1) emphasised listening to young people's specific concerns and acknowledging their self-protective skills they may bring to their situations. Bethany seemed to be performing here what she perceived to be an ultra-conforming stance. Her narrative implied governmentality and self-editing (Foucault, 1979). As the interview progressed, she revealed increasing dissonance and frustration with this approach and a new narrative stream emerged.

Narrative 2- Low thresholds as undermining the alliance: The first story about low thresholds was in direct contrast to a second more resistant narrative stream that was

revealed increasingly towards the second half of the interview. This highlighted a continual vacillation between conformity and resistance in her account (Foucault, 1979). Here, Bethany described her frustration with the low thresholds for over-riding young people's confidentiality.

That kind of line that Place2Be takes which almost goes into any sign of distress and I'm thinking "distress is human". It's not a child protection issue [...] you are allowed to feel unhappy without it being a child protection issue. It's managing that [big sigh].

It was unclear whether the word 'managing' here referred to managing young client's reactions to non-consensual information sharing or Bethany managing her own feelings of discomfort. The latter raised questions about how professionals tolerate and contain their discomfort about young people's distress and whether the escalation to make a safeguarding referral becomes a tool for processing professional anxiety. This theme echoed Gaby's (C6) description in the previous chapter, about her concern over premature/over-zealous information sharing especially when young people display distress. Below Bethany described 'stepping-back' when informing a young person that their information will be passed on.

*And maybe they can sense me kind of slightly stepping back—I think their experience is that 'I just told **you!** [Emphasis]'. Now you are going to tell Miss and she's gonna tell someone else. "Yeah—wish I hadn't bothered".*

Bethany seemed to reflect on the impact on young people of going *offline* in the relationship. This suggested a dilution of the counsellor's *availability* for the young person. Bethany suggested that this will result in an angry reaction, or a rupture in the therapeutic alliance. Later, she described how sometimes the voluntary counsellors she supervises can fail to spot something that would be regarded as a safeguarding issue within a session itself. In this situation, it falls to her to inform the young person that their information is going to be shared. This happens outside of a counselling session and the therapeutic relationship that enabled the original disclosure. She described how this situation can damage therapeutic alliances.

She was furious [...] and I'm not really surprised because there were big knock-on effects involving social services and police [...]. She refused point-blank to see the counsellor at all.

This sort of angry response and rupture to the alliance concurs with the reaction of young people from both research groups to the idea of information being shared, without their own counsellor discussing it with them first.

These were highly contradictory narratives within Bethany's interview. One formulated very low thresholds for information sharing as helpful and protective, and promoting trust. The other suggested low thresholds caused ruptures in therapeutic alliances, anger and a dilution of counsellor *availability*. I believe this dissonance displayed some of the tensions and confusions at the heart of this area. These contradictions perhaps, illuminated a process of governmentality or self-policing operating co-currently with resistance to dominate discourses existing within the Place2Be (Foucault, 1979). Bethany has absorbed powerful discourses about how to 'get it right' in safeguarding which included focusing on following protocol, such as referrals to CAMHS for incidences of self-harm and yet her practical wisdom/phronesis derived from working alongside young people also caused her to want to resist this approach which she perceived as damaging to alliances. Bethany's narrative illustrated Foucault's ideas that 'Where there is power, there is resistance' (Foucault, 1979, p. 95). For Bethany, there seemed a tension in perceiving herself as both a good counsellor and good at safeguarding, simultaneously.

'Do You Have to Tell me Now?' Counsellor Unavailability

Later in the interview, Bethany talked about how she sometimes felt 'dread' about seeing young people in sessions after a disclosure, because of fear about how they may react. This contrasted with her earlier optimistic story about the impact of information sharing on the therapeutic alliance.

Before the time [...] I kind of think that whole "are they going to hate me? Are they even going to come? What is going to have happened? Has the situation got worse?" ...That slight feeling of dread— really going into it.

She talked about how she tried to avoid seeing young people on a Friday afternoon because of an anticipated lack of containment of the worry over the weekend.

*I try not to see children particularly on Friday afternoon... because I want to go home and have a life. I often as well as the transference of what is going on for them— I am also thinking "**do you have to tell me now?**" [Bethany's emphasis] And I'm feeling*

frustrated and slightly resentful of the ball being passed to me. So [...] I think it's very important to acknowledge that [...] And obviously you're trying to as much as possible, stay with their process [...] But it is really hard when they really don't want you to tell.— And you are sort of stuck with that horrible feeling guilty [...] yet you know what you've got to do because it is safeguarding and you know you have got to. You are trying to help and that's the best way really. But yet when you're stuck with the person who is in agony [...] really it's really horrible [Bethany's emphasis].

Above, Bethany recounted her dread of being 'stuck' with the reactions of young people who are unhappy about their information being shared. She expressed a desire to stay focused on their concerns but became overwhelmed by the 'horror' of telling a young person that their information is to be shared without consent. I was struck by the strength of these negative feelings and particularly by the word 'horror'. She acknowledged her human desire to avoid these situations and the strength of the feelings that accompany them, especially when she anticipates insufficient containment opportunities. By using the word 'transference' here she implied that her reflection on this process afterwards is that the feelings originate in the young person (reactive countertransference). However, during the information sharing process itself, she seemed to acknowledge that she becomes pre-occupied and 'stuck' with the young person's 'agony'. The power of these feelings could suggest an experience of projective identification where negative, chaotic and unprocessed feelings are projected into a counsellor, by a client (Klein, 1946). Without the opportunity for professional containment this felt like a 'horror' to Bethany. It was also possible that the experience had provoked a proactive countertransference reaction (Clarkson, 2004). It was also difficult to assess whether part of the 'horror' also resided with Bethany's professional feelings about passing on information without consent in the context of a therapeutic relationship. However, Bethany's level of pre-occupation here suggested her cognition was partially impaired. She seemed to be making an explicit link between an insufficient experience of containment and her psychological *unavailability* by asserting '*you're trying to as much as possible, stay with their process [...] But it is really hard*'.

Containment as Adult Authority

Throughout Bethany's narrative, she did not emphasise young people's participation. On reading her transcript, I realised that at one point I inadvertently tried to prompt her to

discuss empowering young people by mistakenly paraphrasing that she would frame her conversation with the fictional Lucy as a discussion. To which she responded.

And I think there is something very undermining about saying “right well we’re going to pass on to somebody else and you don’t get a choice in that” so if possible [...] I try to acknowledge the process that led her to that point and outline really [...] well really I’m not asking I’m saying that’s what’s going to happen next.

This quote represented a microcosm of the dissonance expressed throughout the whole interview where Bethany acknowledged the importance of young people’s autonomy, but remains focused on adult authority, perceptions and processes. The ‘concerns’ expressed are formulated as the adult professional’s concerns, and the young people’s immediate concerns and wishes remain below the horizon. Yet at the same time she expressed considerable ambivalence about the implication of this. She seemed to be describing her practice as conforming to the ‘letter’ of what she perceived to be the correct safeguarding protocol. Whilst concerned to be seen to be ‘getting it right’ she also revealed considerable discomfort.

Like Gaby, Bethany used the word ‘containment’ to describe using adult authority to share information.

I feel that somebody just needs containing and then I will say “this is basically what’s going to happen next” and try and stay with the fact that they’re very upset about that but it’s still what can happen next.

This use of the word ‘containment’ here to describe the perceived psychological outcome of adults making decisions echoes counsellor Gaby’s (C6) use of this word. Bethany (C2) like Gaby (C6) implied that sometimes taking the responsibility away from young people lowers anxiety. The quote above was highly contentious with the young people. One group responded angrily to the actor speaking Bethany’s words that that would mean ‘*there was no trust whatsoever*’. The other group acknowledged that clients might be angry at first, but ‘*thank the counsellor later*’ but even this group was in favour of a much more open participatory approach than is suggested by Bethany’s narrative.

I have reflected on this ‘double-standard’ operating around ideas around the theoretical concept of ‘containment’ that privileged adult authority. It strongly echoed Steckley’s (2010) ideas about containment/ ‘constrainment’ of young people discussed earlier, where the reflective function of containment is obscured by everyday ideas about constraining young

people's choices. Twice, Bethany highlighted the importance of having an opportunity to process her own feelings with someone in a way that lowers anxiety and makes feelings more manageable '*because I want to go home and have a life*'. However, when the word was used in the context of young clients it seemed to describe adults taking charge and making decisions without involving young people. As Bethany continued her narrative about how she would work with the fictional Lucy, like Ada (C1) there is a focus on adult processes and protocol and a resulting loss of focus on the young person.

I would email her the form first of all— and then physically go and find her. If it was something like that I might physically go find her first and then either mail her the form.

'It's Personal' Professional Mistrust and Information Sharing

Bethany's expressed anxiety about the impact on her clients of her DSL leaving. She recounted a story about a previous DSL who spoke insensitively or sided with parents when child protection concerns were raised.

I've been in meetings with DSL in the past where I really regret telling them. Because I sort of think if I was the child I would tell you to 'F... off!' quite frankly. So it's—where they have been really disbelieving [.] or if they have sided with the parent. Sided against the child.

Bethany's pre-occupation with who will take over as DSL emerged early in the interview and is expanded upon towards its conclusion. She talked about the high turnover of DSLs and its impact on her as a professional, and on the counselling service.

I think it just takes time to build up that trusting relationship. So the current DSL Daisy— we have a very good relationship there is more free-flow of information.... But she's probably gone soon and then it starts again [.] Building up that trusting relationship with the next one..... I think it's so personal...

Bethany related how she believed that trust is at the heart of professional relationships and this trusting relationship between the adult professionals takes time to develop. This trust seemed to parallel the ongoing trust necessary for young people to disclose their concerns (Lefevre et al., 2017). In Chapter 3, I discussed a broadening field of research on the importance of good communicative working relationships between school staff and SBCs to ensure the effective provision of school counselling services (Hill, et al., 2012; Hamilton-

Roberts, 2012; Armstrong, 2014). However, in my reading of Bethany's narrative here I noticed how she highlighted the very '*personal*' nature of these working relationships. Bethany suggested that this '*personal*' element is at the heart of professional trust. Bethany seemed to infer, that personal relationships with DSLs influence not only '**how**' information was shared, but also possibly '**what**' and '**when**' information was shared. This raises the likelihood that relationship processes between adult professionals mirror the disclosure process between young people and counsellor, where decisions are made about what feels safe to share, and with whom (Prior, 2012). Bethany described not wanting to share information '*unless the trust is going to be held*'. The implied narrative here imagines how the interaction that Bethany described above (where the safeguarding officer sided with the parent) may have influenced Bethany's decision-making the next time she received a disclosure from a young person.

As the interview concluded, Bethany expressed cynicism about her relationships with school staff and mistrust in her early experiences of working for the Place2Be.

*I was also new to Place2Be—didn't really have any reason to trust the organisation and they weren't particularly supportive when I started. The school— when you start in a new school always have their own expectations. So it's that kind of sense of "**who can you trust really—to take care of you as a practitioner and therefore to take care of the clients?**" [Bethany's emphasis].*

Most of the counsellors in my study named the Place2Be as their main source of support when it came to safeguarding concerns. However, for Bethany there was ambivalence about the support she has received from the organisation. In contrast, she emphasised the importance of relationships with other professional peers as an alternative source of non-judgmental advice and encouragement. She closed by implying that this lack of support has negatively '*affected*' her and her colleagues. Although, it was not clear what the exact nature of this impact was on Bethany there was a suggestion of feeling stressed, anxious and isolated. My interpretation was that, in the wake of not feeling like the organisation was available and trustworthy for her, it remained difficult for her to retain *availability* for her young clients. At worst, this resulted in a defensive process of wanting to detach from young clients and avoid the feelings associated with safeguarding processes (Freud, A., 1937; Rustin, 2005; Ferguson, 2017).

Bethany concluded by making a direct connection between the trust she experienced in professional relationships in delivering the counselling service and the trust she offered young people. On the surface, she referred to trusting school staff to talk to young people in a sensitive way. However, perhaps she was also describing here how difficult it was to maintain *availability* and contain young people's material during those times when she did not feel adequately supported or contained herself.

The phrase '*it's so personal*' may also speak to the strength of the negative emotions that arose during disclosures and information sharing. As has been discussed in the two previous counsellors' accounts, some of these negative feelings may have originated in the felt experience of the young clients with whom the counsellors are working and hence may be regarded as 'reactive countertransference' or alternatively they might be 'pro-active' countertransference originating in counsellors' past history (Clarkson, 2004; Jacobs 2004). However, I believe that some of the stress and anxiety might have been a proportionate response to information sharing and the anxiety that exists within professional systems who work with young people who may be at risk. Whatever the origin of the feelings described by Bethany and her counselling colleagues, having a timely opportunity to share concerns and feel supported and not judged on the work, seems significant in helping to avoid feeling overwhelmed and retain enough cognitive space to remain open and *available* to young people. Bethany highlighted the importance of counsellors (and other professionals) being taken care of in safeguarding processes as well as young people and emphasised that these processes operate parallel with each other.

A Summary of the Narrative Analysis

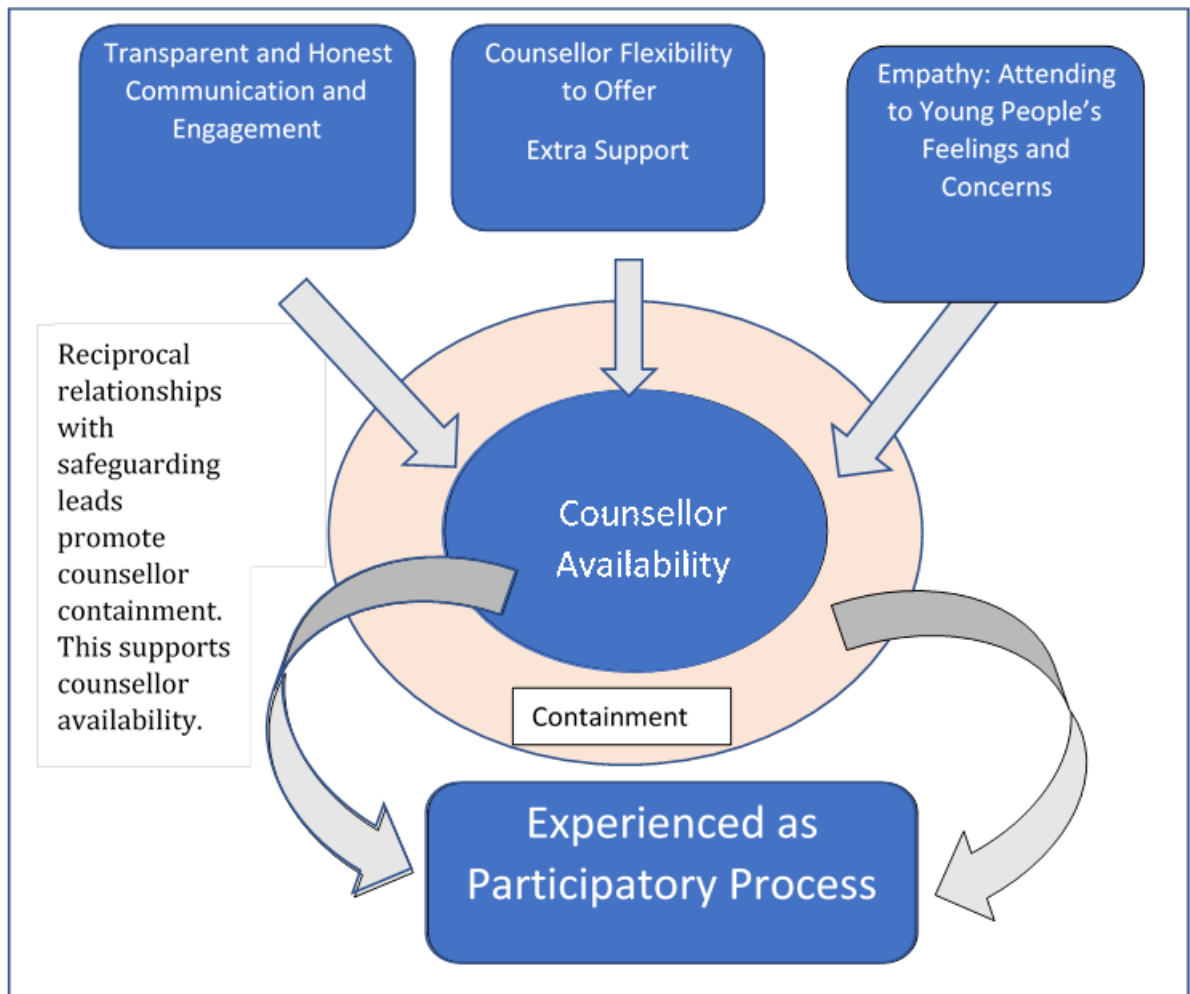
In this chapter, I have explored three individual counsellors' subjective experiences and the stories they told about their relationships with their respective DSL. I excavated beneath the surface to apply ideas about psychological containment and to investigate what their stories revealed about their potential *availability* for young clients during safeguarding processes (Riessman, 2008; Clarke, 2018). This revealed factors that support and obstruct counsellor *availability*. Such *un/availability* may impact trust in alliances with young people. Ada's narrative account revealed her anxiety to find her often unavailable and unresponsive safeguarding lead. For Ada, anxiety about contacting her DSL may have resulted in 'attacks on linking' and an impaired ability to reflect during information sharing itself (Bion, 1970). Ideas

about mentalisation may also be pertinent in that Ada's immediate ability to perceive her client's mental state and her own, seemed impaired by her pre-occupation and anxiety, resulting in a loss of 'reflection-in-action' (Schön, 1983; Midgely and Vrouva, 2013; Fonagy, 2018). The insecurity of her relationship with her DSL seemed associated with the disruption of her 'witness thinking' so that there appeared to be a dilution of her therapeutic presence and withdrawal of her psychological contact with her client (Rogers 1985; Mearns and Cooper, 2005; Shotter and Tsoukas, 2014:391). Gaby, by contrast, described her relationship with her safeguarding lead (Harriet, DSL2) as characterised by physical accessibility, reciprocity and professional mutuality (Douglas, 2007). The value of this 'thinking-together' about a vulnerable young person supported Gaby's containment and may have the potential to lower the anxiety of both parties (Bevington and Fuggle, 2012). Gaby's narrative suggested that she maintained a greater *availability* and focus on the therapeutic alliance. Bethany described an accessible but non-reciprocal relationship with her safeguarding lead (Douglas, 2007). Bethany admitted that she is sometimes pre-occupied and unavailable and wants to avoid the 'horror' of information sharing. Her narrative revealed fragmentation in her therapeutic presence and *availability*. This suggested her ability to mentalise and reflect on her own feelings, and deliberate on her clients', became impaired (Fonagy, 2018). This disconnect seemed to centre on her anticipation of insufficient containment and sometimes a lack of bi-lateral trust with her organisation. At points, she admitted feeling overwhelmed and detaching from the source of anxiety i.e. the young person.

Building on the Theory of Counsellor Availability

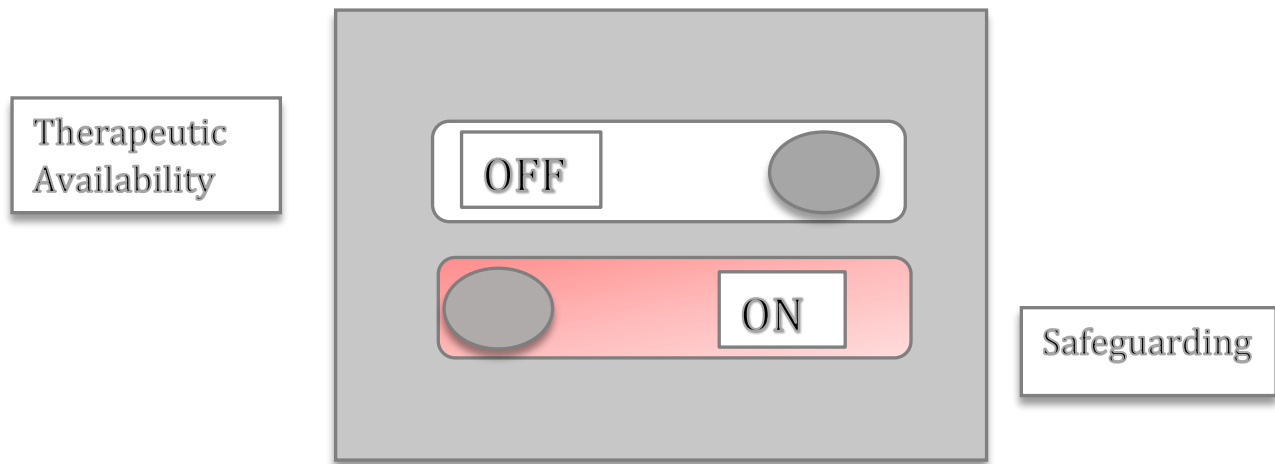
The three counsellor narratives revealed how a counsellors' focus on young people's concerns and therapeutic alliances are impacted by the relational contexts in which they work. The combination of the exposure to the powerful feelings of young clients and the anxiety to get 'the job' done in terms of protecting their safety and being seen to do so 'correctly' by institutions, can leave counsellors stressed and anxious. For counsellors who do not feel adequately supported or have undeveloped relationships with their safeguarding leads, this can potentially cause cognitive pre-occupation and a lack of reflective space. For counsellors in this situation, it seemed harder to maintain *availability* during information sharing processes (see, Figure 16).

Figure16: The Impact of Containment on Counsellor Availability



When Ada described wanting to have 'two bodies', one who could do the safeguarding and one to 'stay' with the young person, she uncovered a binary that can get enacted in school counselling safeguarding practice (see, Figure 17). Safeguarding action and maintaining availability in the therapeutic alliance seemed to be regarded as mutually dichotomous. Like a simple electric circuit 'doing' safeguarding requires turning off attention to the therapeutic relationship and alliance, the danger being that the imperative of safeguarding overrides the focus on what is therapeutic in counselling. Yet all participants (both professional and young people) point to the importance of continued counsellor *availability* in helping to maintain trust in therapeutic alliances.

Figure 17: A Binary Approach to Therapeutic Availability and Safeguarding

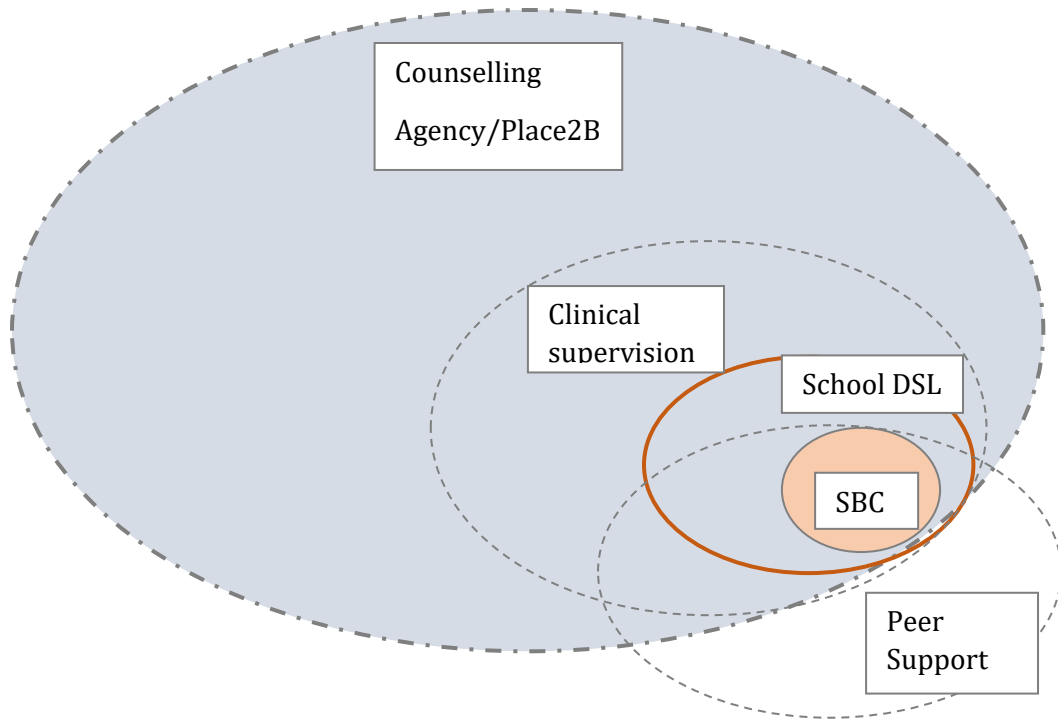


Considering the wealth of negative feelings associated with safeguarding, counsellors who felt more supported and contained during safeguarding processes were less likely to become overwhelmed and retain their capacity to stay *available* to their clients. The importance of these outer relational contexts and systems in maintaining trust within therapeutic alliances was best summarised by Bethany.

“Who can you trust really—to take care of you as a practitioner and therefore to take care of the clients?”.

The suggestion was that maintaining the trust during the information sharing requires concentric layers of trust: trust between the counsellor and the young person; trust between the counsellor and the school safeguarding lead; and the counsellor and the counselling organisation (See Figure 18). The thematic analysis also revealed the helpful role of peer support as buffer zones, outside of the management of the service where counsellors can seek advice and feel safe to discuss their dilemmas and decision-making. The role of clinical supervision was also discussed. However, professional relationships with safeguarding leads represent the most proximal opportunities for discussing safeguarding worries. DSLs are on-site at the school and the conduit through whom concerns need to be passed. The narrative analysis revealed that these professional relationships play a pivotal role, not only in safeguarding practice, but also in counsellor containment. Mistrust between the adult professionals and organisations impaired counsellor *availability* and therefore potentially makes trust between counsellors and young people much harder to achieve.

Figure 18: Circles of Trust and Containment for School Counsellors



The Phronesis of Information Sharing: A Commentary

In this closing section, I take time to reflect on the phronesis of the participants/groups in this study and how these converging viewpoints and dis/connects combine to contribute to contextual knowledge in this area (Yin, 2009; Flyvbjerg, 2016). I start by considering the contribution of the young people.

Young People

The young participants demonstrated significant expertise in their understanding of the role of trust and confidentiality and disclosures of risk within counselling and how to navigate relationships through information sharing. They highlighted the central importance of continued honest, active engagement and how it influences the perception of consent³⁹ for

³⁹ See page 128 onwards and page 156 onwards.

information sharing. They equally raised the importance of continued focus on clients' feelings and concerns⁴⁰. These ideas are at the core of the development of the theory of counsellor *availability*. Young people highlighted the importance of on-going trust in facilitating further disclosures⁴¹. They emphasised that developing a strong bond with a counsellor supports on-going resilience in trust in alliances with young people⁴². They also illuminated the value of non-pressured activities during sessions following information sharing. All these ideas have much potential to develop school counselling practice. They also demonstrated their understanding of contingent responses by reflecting how the counsellor may need to adapt their practice according to the age of the client and the degree of risk s/he faced.

For example, Sian and Kirsty reflect on how a younger age of client should influence how much autonomy a counsellor should give to young people.

Sian (YP1): She would be in more danger.

T: Would it be more ok for the adult to take charge?

Sian (YP1): Probably more— but you still need to talk to her.

Kirsty (YP2): She's younger—she doesn't understand as much. But when it comes to older age, then you have more understanding of what you would want to happen. Like yeah

This case study illuminated the practical wisdom and reflexivity of these young people. They used their abilities to appraise the story of the vignette, referenced it against their own experiences and adapted their responses, both in response to further reflection, discussion and by considering how different variables such as the fictional Lucy's intentions and age might determine different approaches from her counsellor. Young participants demonstrated insight into the nuanced and competing intentions that result in not/making disclosures. For example, below:

Sian [YP]: [yeah yeah] You don't know what happens when she is in the house with mum [...] because she is drunk and she could like abuse her [...] and stuff. She might just not say it because that will get her mum into more trouble...

⁴⁰ See page 133 onwards.

⁴¹ See page 156 onwards

⁴² See page 121 onwards

They brought to this research an intimate understanding of being a client in school counselling and the complexity of being both vulnerable and capable. They also demonstrated understanding how temporality may impact views on information sharing.

Gemma (YP9): Because deep down she knows it [information sharing] was the right thing to do. She might not have liked it, but she knows it was the best for her really.

Young people weighed up competing ethical and moral dimensions of counselling, trust, confidentiality and information sharing.

Bella (YP8): I think that if the counsellor shares the information with somebody else and then I think that if that gets sorted out like [...] before [...] she talks about something else that might be happening [...] it might then give her the confidence to carry on with the counselling. If that has a positive outcome then—if she has benefited from it [...] then maybe, she'll think that it's a good thing to do.

This echoes Manning's (2012) exploration of young people's reflexive evaluations of the ethical and moral dimensions of everyday life. These ideas will be further discussed and theorized, in Chapter 8.

School Counsellors and Safeguarding Leads

Despite areas of dissonance with young people, the counsellors displayed considerable phronetic knowledge and expertise of the practices that support trust through information sharing. All the counsellors and one DSL agreed about the value of continued transparent engagement⁴³ and a continued focused on young people's concerns and feelings⁴⁴. Despite differences in emphasis compared with young people (professionals placing greater emphasis on unconscious processes) they agreed with young participants about the complexity of the relationship between trust and disclosure⁴⁵. Corporately, the counsellors possessed considerable contextual 'expertise' in deciding on '*what is good to do*' with young clients to best maintain trust in the counselling relationships when sharing information (Schram,

⁴³ See page 125 onwards.

⁴⁴ See page 133 onwards.

⁴⁵ See page 124 onwards.

2012:19). These ideas interconnected with those of the young people, to help to develop the theory of counsellor *availability*.

However, this study revealed that counsellors' phronetic deliberation was sometimes obscured or curtailed, by anxiety about safeguarding processes and protocol. Both counsellors and DSLs described feeling constrained by the emphasis on safeguarding policy and protocol. Counsellor Ellie (C4) asserted '*this is how I'd like to work*' when describing encouraging young people's participation. All counsellors and DSLs asserted their belief at some point in their interviews that they had no choice but to override young people's choices and participation '*because it's safeguarding*'. This analysis matches the idea of procedurally dominated practice and associated professional anxiety about getting it wrong, previously documented in social work literature, here revealed in a non-statutory counselling service (Ruch, 2005; Parton, 2006; Munro, 2011). For SBCs, this process was greatly impacted upon by the quality and reciprocity of professional relationship with DSLs. It was impossible to definitively ascribe the source of counsellors' anxiety. Using a psychodynamic framework, it may be attributed to a lack of containment of countertransference projections evoked through working with vulnerable young people (Bion, 1970; Clarkson, 2004; Sprince, 2000). Sometimes this anxiety resulted in a temporary loss of focus on (see Ada, C1), or a detaching from the young person (see Bethany, C2). However, this factor seemed to be intensified by anxious discourses about safeguarding which Gaby (C6) describes as a '*red herring*' and a pre-occupation with protocol. These processes also suggested a lack of institutional containment of projections that come about from supporting large numbers of vulnerable young people (See Menzies-Lyth, 1992, Bion 1970; Sprince, 2000).

These processes seemed to contribute to most counsellors not feeling licensed to name information sharing as a decision-making process and thereby claim the application of their phronetic insight. Safeguarding tended to be described as a matter of 'recognition' rather than a process that required active decision-making and ethical deliberation. There was a tendency for counsellor participants to perform procedural conformity. Active deliberation was often implied or leaked, for example by '*pick [ing] up the phone*' to other counselling colleagues to check out their decisions and actions or reflecting on past cases and adapting subsequent practice. Three of the counsellors (Ada, C1; Bethany, C2; Gaby, C6; and Ellie, C4) expressed active frustration about the difference between following 'correct protocol' and what they judged to be '*the best thing to do. [Ellie, C4]*'. They also commented on the potential negative impact on therapeutic relationships of deviating from their judgement of what they believed

to be the best practice. Thus, Bethany (C2) described her client saying *'I wish I hadn't bothered'* in response to disclosing self-harm and being informed that that information will be passed on. Despite this obscuring of their practical wisdom/phronesis I believe it was clearly demonstrated in their contributions to the theory of counsellor *availability* described above. This knowledge illuminated the relational, affective and cognitive processes they were using to seek to maintain trust in therapeutic relationships. The focus on procedurally dominated practice may obscure the 'reflection in action' or reflexivity of professional practitioners that helps them to decide how best to work with individual young people (Schön, 1983). This in turn may be undermining professional confidence and contributing to feelings of disempowerment that the professionals described. These ideas will be further explored in my discussion chapter.

Chapter 8: The Trust is the Work: A Discussion

Introduction

In this chapter, I critically reflect on my findings about relationships between young people and school based counsellors (SBC) during information sharing and explore how these ideas may be theorised.

Brown's (2006:1) study of ethical decision-making helpfully highlights how counsellors are often

'...engaged in a process of negotiation between the inner and outer worlds of the client, the agency, society and themselves'.

It is this range of interactions I have sought to capture. My ontological stance is that human beings construct meaning through the interplay between internal processes and dialogic contexts in which they are situated (Frosh, 2003). I am interested in the dynamic exchange between the individual's internal world and their social context, where both have the power to influence each other. I draw on relational, social constructionist and phronetic theoretical strands. I have used phronetic bricolage to produce a web of interconnecting ideas to explore my research questions by discovering intersections between different discourses (Lincoln and Denzin, 2000; Trnavcevic and Biloslavo, 2017). To capture the humanness of school counsellor information sharing, I have applied a multi-layered analysis, analytical, relational and affective (Todre, 2007; Landman, 2012).

The Phronesis of Professionals and Young People

This is the first research study that has allowed young people an opportunity to express detailed views about SBC information sharing. Young participants in this study potently demonstrated their insider knowledge of being a young client in school counselling (Kellet, 2010) and have enabled new understandings to be created. The theory of counsellor *availability* was developed by using their insights. This elucidates the inadequacies of an over-reliance on an 'adults only' definition of how to promote 'best interests' in safeguarding practice. The ten young participants brought significant reflexivity to this research. This resonates with Manning's (2012) study (of political engagement) which suggests that young

people apply phronesis to areas of ethical complexity (Manning, 2012). This included the ability to cross-reference their experience against imagined scenarios, consider the intentions and feelings (and the temporal dimensions of both), and make adaptations according to changes such as age of a client or degree of risk they face. If Polkinghorne (2004) and Kinsella (2010) consider phronesis to be contingent deliberation that makes use of experience and context knowledge to determine what is unique about a case, these young people have demonstrated this skill. They reflected on the moral dimensions of trust, confidentiality, risk and honesty and highlighted what they believed to be '*good to do*' when sharing information from school counselling (Schram, 2012:19). This moves phronetic ideas on from Aristotle, who originally considered young people as lacking in phronesis due to limited experience (Aristotle in Nicomachean Ethics: 1955 Edition). The young people displayed a nuanced understanding based on their knowledge of school contexts, and their affective experience of being a client and risking enough trust in a counsellor to share painful material with unknowable consequences. Most young people seemed to understand the precarity of counselling and safeguarding and the unique vulnerability of its intersection (Butler, 2004; Boddy, Bakketeig, and Østergaard (2019). The young participants explored the overlapping dangers of a client's life situation, with the precarity of being involved in safeguarding processes. This, they perceived as an out of control experience, requiring considerable relational trust in a counsellor (Bond, 2015). They brought immediacy to reflections on daring to trust despite a structural lack of power in school contexts and in adult controlled safeguarding processes (Mayall, 2006; Lucas, 2017). They understood the 'feel for the game' and what was at stake by being a student in a school, in terms of relations of power (Bourdieu, 1998). This vital perspective could only have been illuminated by involving young people and facilitating their active participation.

The Obscured Phronesis of School Counsellor Information Sharing

Despite some areas of dissonance with young people the professionals in this study equally contributed to the development of a theory of counsellor *availability*. They demonstrated sophisticated understanding of how to maintain and repair trust with clients. This availability requires counsellors to maintain a focus on young people and retain their ability to mentalize the client's emotional state (Fonagy et al., 2004). This could also be described as '*withness thinking*' where clients' internal states continue to matter to counsellors (Shotter and Tsoukas, 2014:391). Despite this evidenced practical wisdom, a surprising finding from this

study is that most of the participating counsellors did not seem to feel licensed to formulate information sharing as a decision-making process. The Place2Be as an organisation, does not appear to consider it a dilemma in their literature. The agency publicity emphasises its strong safeguarding policies that prioritize multi-professional working and '*robust data-keeping and reporting*' where they offer young people what they describe as 'partial' confidentiality (Place2be, 2015: 18). My analysis revealed that an active deliberation process **was** being undertaken by counsellors that they perhaps did not feel licensed to explicitly reveal in their narratives. Using ideas from Foucault (1979) one can view this as representative of a process of governmentality where counsellors have internalised a culture of mandatory information sharing. They were following what they believe to be the rules, or at least were concerned to be perceived as applying them. They may have believed that taking an alternative position risked potential professional shame (O'Grady, 2005). There are some parallels with Jenkins and Palmer (2012), where most participants assumed reporting of suspected abuse was legally mandatory. However, the counsellors in the Jenkins and Palmer (2012) study still emphasised their active ethical decision-making processes. My case study revealed an extension of ideas about procedural conformity into non-statutory SBC practice.

In Chapter 3 and 4, I explored literature that highlighted the embodied, affective and often sub-conscious nature of the processing of practical wisdom (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Gendlin, 1962; Dreyfus', 1986, Damasio, 2000). These ideas suggest that expert professionals apply sophisticated improvisational practice involving intuition, working with uncertainty and formulating contingent responses (Schön, 1983; Dreyfus, 1986; Polkinghorne, 2004; Schram, 2012). Professionals may be largely unaware of the complexity of the processing that they are undertaking on a day to day basis. Despite an overall concern to perform procedural conformity, five counsellors in this study (Ada, C1; Gaby, C6; Bethany, C2, Ellie, C4 and Frances, C5) implied an element of active deliberation. Some described phoning peers to check their decisions; others expressed frustration about not being able to follow their own judgements. This factor was often linked, to the potential for negative consequences for the therapeutic alliance with individual clients. This resonates with Russell and Greenhough's (2014) study of health care rationing decisions in the NHS where the technical rationality of official reports failed to capture the contingent, subjective, and embodied decision-making by individual practitioners. The desire to perform procedural conformity may be masking their active deliberation. A focus on procedure may sometimes undermine or obscure practitioners' ability to respond contingently and reflexively with clients and construct a new theory of their

unique case (Kinsella, 2010; Polkinghorne, 2004). This tension may sometimes surface as discontent or frustration by counsellors about '*defensive practice*' and anxiety about clients being angry with them. Does not naming information sharing as a decision-making process, combined with not recognizing the skill of counsellors in making the contingent deliberations that help to maintain alliances with young people, undermine their professional confidence and expertise? Could this factor also be contributing to professional feelings of disempowerment, described in my study?

Confidentiality: A Relational and Participatory Space for Young People

The young people unanimously equated trust with confidentiality. This concurs with previous research that suggests that confidentiality is a central consideration for young people in seeking therapeutic help (Fox & Butler, 2007, Chan & Quin, 2012, Lynass, 2012). Most young people described the function of confidentiality as being to protect sensitive material from judgement and unwanted exposure, gossip and shame in the school environment '*because it's private*'. The confidentiality of counselling seemed to be symbolic of the different nature of the relational space with counsellors where young people felt it was '*for them*'. This seemed to be the case even when young people understood that confidentiality was limited by the requirements of safeguarding. Previous research has highlighted the role of confidentiality in perceived freedom of expression for young people (Fox and Butler, 2007; Lynass et al., 2012; Griffiths, 2013; McArthur et al., 2016). Talking in a confidential space seemed to feel safe and empowering *for* the young participants, even when they understood there were limits to confidentiality. Confidentiality seemed to have a symbolic function for young people, as setting aside a space that was **for** them. This was perceived as a crucially important background factor to counselling, fundamentally interwoven into young people's experiences of power and control.

Counsellors also talked about how after information sharing, the therapeutic frame needs to be re-established (Gray, 1994). Using a psychodynamic lens, the confidentiality of the counselling, like the therapeutic bond, may be perceived as contributing to the 'facilitating environment' which is experienced as a 'secure-base' or safe space in which to explore worries (Winnicott, 1965a; Bowlby, 1988). There are clear differences between Person Centred and psychodynamic theory in the formulation of the role of confidentiality and acceptance in therapeutic work. However, they both put confidentiality at the heart of the

efficacy of therapy. Psychodynamic ideas emphasise how confidentiality and neutrality facilitate free association (Jacobs, 2004). This offers the potential to alter the internal ego structure by developing a more accepting super-ego via the projected transference onto the therapist as a substitute neutral parental figure (Strachey, 1969). This may free clients from powerful repressed feelings that might otherwise remain unexpressed. Alternatively, Person Centred theory evokes non-judgmental acceptance as a core condition that works as a correctional relational experience against internalised 'conditions of worth' and promotes clients to trust the drives of their own organismic, or true self (Mearns and Thorne, 2007; Mearns and Cooper, 2005). This in turn supports an internal locus of control, rather than being driven by internalised judgements from others in the environment. Although different in emphasis, both orientations link confidentiality with therapeutic, non-judgement with the freedom to express repressed feelings.

Winnicott (1964a) and Frankel (1988) suggest that adolescence is a time when young people are developing their adult identities and wish to avoid feeling exposed or intruded upon. This may be especially pertinent for young people who enter counselling who have experienced abuse, as there may already be a sense of invasion, of their 'core self'⁴⁶ not only their bodily integrity, but also their separate sense of an agentic self (Frankel, 1998; Hughes, 2009). By disclosing private thoughts and experiences, young people may fear judgement and subjective interpretation by others (Knight, Gibson and Cartwright, 2018). Knight, Gibson and Cartwright's (2018) study interviewing 22 young people age 16-18 years, describes how relationships with SBCs are perceived as a 'refuge' or sanctuary set apart from the demanding nature of school environments. The young people in my study seemed to echo this, by focusing on the separateness of counselling spaces, which are delineated by confidentiality. Confidentiality, even where limited, seemed to support the creation of a set aside 'protected' safe space that helps facilitates young people to share (Winnicott, 1965a).

Holliday (2014) uses Winnicott's (1965a) ideas of 'protected', or 'transitional space' of therapy with young people. She suggests that, when working with young people, confidentiality cannot be watertight because of their vulnerability and dependence on adults,

⁴⁶ Stern (1985:99) defines a core self from a developmental perspective as 'a sense of continuity, and a sense of others as distinct and separate'. This is required to become a unified and fully integrated person who is in control over one's actions.

but rather needs to be semi-permeable. She uses the analogy of skin as an intelligent, protective layer to describe a process of osmosis where some situations require material to keep safe within a boundary and some require the careful transmission of client material outside of the boundary of the counselling room. The findings of my research affirm the value of this metaphor. It also takes this concept forward by analysing participants' responses as to how best to share information through this 'permeable skin'.

Alternatively, a sociological perspective could describe how the set-aside relational space that confidentiality affords changes the power dynamic between young person and adult professional. If, as Gallagher (2006) suggests, particular spaces develop particular discourses and subjectivities, it may be that the confidentiality contributes to creating a space, that feels structurally different for young people. The school context inevitably impacts upon experiences of power. James et al (1998: 46) use Foucault to highlight the spatial discipline of schools as places where the word 'child' is ascribed to those who do not exercise or submit to 'regimes of control'. This may contrast with the experience of informal home life, which may feel more negotiated (Mayall, 2002). Bourdieu (1998) reminds us that knowledge of context encompasses 'a feel for the game' and awareness of the stakes in a particular field. Young people who enter a counselling room inevitably come with expectations and experiences of relations of power in education settings. Does confidentiality contribute to subverting the normal hierarchy of power, allowing room for greater agency and participation by young people? This may contrast to the institutional public space of the school environment (James et al. 1998; Mayall, 2006; Lucas, 2017).

Schools' mission statements may encourage self-reliance and independence, but school processes often sanction expressions of autonomy (Thomas, 2002; Jenks, 2004). Relational spaces such as counselling, which explicitly seek young people's views, may feel more empowering and hence more trustworthy for young people (Mayall, 2006; Moss, 2006, 2007). Moss (2007) suggests young people's participation may change spaces structurally, making them more improvisational and reciprocal. Spaces that actively structure opportunities for participation may shift the micro-democracy so that external adult agendas and policy initiatives are less of a focus. It could be argued that confidential counselling sessions evoke a structural boundary, marking a symbolic delineation with the school as an outer context. Equally, the paramountcy of ethics within counselling, which places principles such as autonomy, confidentiality and fidelity (trust) as core, and uses practices such as contracting, which imply mutuality, could further serve to delineate the differing perception of the power

‘rules’ of counselling spaces for young people (BACP, 2018). The young people and the counsellors in this case study seem to characterize the confidentiality of the counselling as symbolic of it being **for** the young person.

Counsellor Availability

Through my data analysis, I developed an over-arching theory concerning counsellor *availability*. Such *availability* is formulated both psychologically, for example by maintaining empathy and care and continuing to be centred on the young person’s feelings and concerns; and practically, in terms of counsellor flexibility to offer extra support. This *availability* demonstrates the counsellor’s continued therapeutic presence throughout information sharing (Prever, 2015). It communicates to the young person that the counsellor is still being a ‘counsellor’. A strong feature of an *available* counsellor is their perceived trustworthiness, demonstrated by their continued engagement with the young person, honest and transparent communication and continued empathy. These processes were perceived as participatory, involving young people in information sharing. Continued counsellor *availability* promotes on-going trust in the alliance. Supporting participation during safeguarding also promotes young people’s agency, which offers the possibility of enhancing empowerment, self-worth, self-efficacy and confidence (Limber & Kaufman, 2002; Schofield, 2005). This suggests that there may be significant therapeutic opportunities created by maintaining *availability* during information sharing. This is an area worthy of further research.

Availability functioned on several levels, including maintaining empathy, mutual dialogue and the counsellor maintaining a psychological ‘withness’ as well as a physical presence⁴⁷. Prever (2015) suggests alliances with young people in counselling rest upon psychological contact and therapeutic presence on the part of the counsellor. Within humanistic counselling literature, the idea of therapeutic presence has drawn on existential and phenomenological ideas. It incorporates Heidegger’s concept of Dasein, ‘there-being’ or being with (Heidegger, 1962). According to this idea, our humanness exists in a world of objects and relationships to which we are joined through a shared, relational and overlapping engagement with the world (Flowers, Larkin and Smith, 2009). This intersubjective relatedness speaks to our contextual

⁴⁷ Here, I am adapting ideas from Shotter & Tsoukas (2014)

embeddedness and supports our ability to communicate and understand each other and the world (Heidegger, 1962). Rollo May (1983:163) suggests that 'the therapist's function is to *'be there'* (with all the connotations of Dasein-being there and being with the world), present in the relationship. Geller and Greenberg (2002) highlight three aspects of therapeutic presence: inwardly attending, receptivity, and making contact by being transparent and accessible to the client. Bugental (1978: 36) described such presence as *'being there in body, in emotions, in relating, in thoughts, in every way... (Both) accessible and expressive'*. Therapeutic presence is therefore characterized by being *'totally in the situation'* (Bugental, 1976:36) or being fully present in an existentialist sense. This encounter is necessarily an embodied experience, as it is only through our bodies that humans can communicate with the world and other people (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). The importance of presence for the therapeutic encounter runs all the way through gestalt, experiential, dialogical and humanistic therapies (Rowan and Jacobs, 2002). However, amongst the psychoanalytic schools of therapy, Jung (1966) emphasises the importance of using the whole self and personality of the therapist and Winnicott (2013) commented on the value of being there as a breathing human being. Mearns and Thorne (2007) describe such therapeutic availability as a way of being, and strongly link it to congruence or therapist transparency as it denotes the availability of the personhood of the therapist in the service of the client. There is some suggestion that Rogers (1957) considered therapeutic presence as a fourth core condition necessary for therapeutic change to occur (Feltman and Dryden, 1994). R.D. Laing emphasises the combined presence of the therapist and the presence of the client, which he described as 'co-presence' and 'non-intrusive attentiveness' (Feldmar in Mullan, 1997:350). Both the value of continued counsellor 'attentiveness' and 'co-presence' seem to connect to ideas about counsellor *availability*. My participants pointed to the importance of maintaining this connectedness, transparency, attentiveness and presence through information sharing.

Taking up this idea of attentiveness, I argue that a sensitive responsiveness to the feelings and experiences of the client is also a central part of therapeutic presence. This raises the role of empathy and the ability of counsellors to be able to perceive young people's subjective experiences, and to communicate their understanding of these experiences during information sharing. This is not possible without the therapeutic presence of the counsellor. Workers from various orientations confirm the significance of empathy to the therapeutic encounter. Thus, both Mearns and Thorne (2007) and Rogers (1985) liken this process to the therapist putting aside their own frame of reference to perceive the feelings of the client as

fully as possible, offering a mirror where clients have an opportunity to see themselves and their experiences reflected. The communication of empathy takes a central part in Roger's necessary and sufficient conditions for therapeutic growth (1957). From psychodynamic theory, Kohut (1984) places empathy as central amongst his ideas of the projective functions of self-psychology where the therapist must imagine what it feels like to be the client and attempt to resonate with their emotional state. This process enables clients to see themselves mirrored and feel that somebody understands them in the world (Kohut, 1984). The counsellor needs to understand the client's thoughts and feelings and successfully reflect that understanding, and through this process demonstrate a *being-with* the client. Cooper's (2008) review of counselling research identified how a failure in therapist understanding is likely to obstruct positive counselling outcomes. Clarkson (2004) suggests empathy is part of the reparative relationship that mitigates against loneliness and disconnection. Friedman (1955) describes it as 'existential healing' meeting the profound need for human contact and responsiveness and a foil to rejection and judgement. This suggests that a failure in empathy during information sharing could result in young person feeling isolated at a time of pronounced anxiety, precarity and vulnerability.

This brings me to the idea of co-presence and the significance of the experience of mutuality in the relationship between young people and counsellors. Buber (1971) seminally formulated ideas about dialogic existentialism by describing the '*I thou*' person-to-person mutual relationship which he contrasted to the '*I-it*' objective or more instrumental, or task orientated relationship (see Yontef, 1993). In this dialogic context, *relatedness* is significant and therefore not *you-plus-I* but what emerges from the interaction and connection between two persons (Buber, 1971). This suggests that human beings discover who they are through relating. Genuine contact promotes growth where each party respects the uniqueness of the other. Buber describes this relational space as the 'between space' which is neither counsellor nor client. In this social field, a dialogic encounter is possible when both parties make themselves psychologically present. These ideas infer that the whole person of the therapist is authentically engaged, but also that there is an equality between them. This idea of a mutual exchange is resonant of the ideas of *availability* in my study where young people emphasised the importance of continued participatory engagement with the counsellor. Buber famously critiqued what he saw as an over-emphasis on individualism and the lack of equality and therefore the lack of full mutuality in the therapist-client relationship in Rogers' Client Centred Therapy (Buber in Anderson and Cissna, 1997). Buber's insistence on mutuality and

transparency in 'I-thou' encounters keeps in focus the importance of a sense of reciprocity in the therapeutic exchange, where clients can perceive their influence. I find Yontef's (1993) characteristics that mark the dialogic relationship to be useful here. These comprise inclusion, presence, commitment to discourse, no exploitation and that dialogue is lived. Bearing in mind the value young people place on equitable and mutual relationships in counselling (Everall & Paulson, 2002), and in my participants assertion of the importance of continued honest engagement through information sharing, a genuine dialogic exchange also seemed to be at the core of the idea of counsellor *availability*.

Central to counsellor *availability* is that counselling and safeguarding are not regarded as 'oil and water' by school-based counsellors. At worst, a simplistic hierarchy may exist where the concern to safeguard (and correctly attend to safeguarding bureaucracy and protocol) switches off the continued therapeutic presence of counsellors and their dialogic engagement. SBCs need to practice a '*both-and*' rather than '*either/or*' approach (Lefevre et al, 2018) to counselling practice during information sharing. This approach recognizes the complex inter-relational dynamics around maintaining trust with young people and its role in both facilitating disclosures and maintaining therapeutic alliances. This formulation accepts that safeguarding and counselling young people are best regarded as a fundamentally interrelated holistic exchange. This approach may also be more respectful of young people's diverse rights, including protection and participation, and avoid any false dichotomy between these rights (Shemmings, 2001; Lefevre et al, 2018).

The Affective and Relational Context of Information Sharing

When discussing information sharing, all adults and young participants used predominantly negative words and phrases to describe their subjective experiences. Fear and anxiety, worry and concern were the feeling words most frequently used in the individual interviews with adult professionals and young people's groups. Young people used words such as 'fear' and 'scary' to describe the disclosure process. There was an associated fear of families being split up, or of the unknown consequences of the safeguarding processes. They used words like 'stress' and 'pressure' to describe their feelings about safeguarding.

If counsellors, experience stress and anxiety themselves during information sharing (see Jenkins and Palmer, 2012), how might this influence their practice with young people? The narrative analysis excavated below three diverse accounts from counsellors to explore the

obstacles to counsellor availability (Riessman, 2008; Clarke, 2018). This level of analysis was informed by research and theory about the role of professional containment in lowering arousal and supporting cognition and reflective processes (Bion, 1970; 2017; Ruch, 2005, 2013). These ideas acknowledge that when under stress people lose their capacity to think about the feelings and thoughts of others (Midgely and Vrouva, 2012). Such ideas underpin the role of professional clinical supervision for counsellors (Carroll, 2009; Hawkins and Shohet, 2012; Peacock, 2014). Peacock (2014) highlights how a core function of supervision is to process unconscious projections that counsellors may be in receipt of so that they can maintain their reflexive capacities. However, in my study I was struck by how much time counsellors spent talking about their safeguarding leads. I was curious about how these relationships might also be impacting counsellor *availability* in school contexts. Research from Lawson (2016) about boundaries in SBC and Harries et al (2017) about supervision of secondary SBCs, suggests that to understand and develop practice it is vital to understand and explore the impact of the school context. Music (2008) suggests schools are anxiety-provoking environments which may encourage professionals to behave in non-reflective ways. Much literature highlights the potential challenges in professional relationships between education staff and counsellors (Cromarty and Richards, 2009; Harris, 2009; Hamilton-Roberts, 2012; Moor, 2014). In my case study, relationships with DSLs seemed to be a significant relational backdrop to SBC information sharing.

All counsellors and safeguarding leads expressed some feelings of disempowerment about safeguarding processes. These un-agentic feelings mirror those of the young people which may suggest that forms of projection, or parallel process, may underpin their origin (Clarkson, 2004). Professionals often absorb the feelings of vulnerable young people (Sprince, 2000; Bevington and Fuggle, 2012). Some social work literature uses psychoanalytic ideas about defences to describe how practitioners can seek to defend against these experiences by detaching from the source of the anxiety, i.e. the young people (Rustin, 2005). Ferguson argues that social worker cognitive functions can become impaired, causing fragmentation in service provision (Ferguson, 2017). Powerful feelings can be projected onto professionals and institutions, causing chaotic, fragmented or neglectful practice (Sprince, 2000; Rustin, 2005; Ferguson 2017). It has been difficult to ascertain with certainty the degree to which this sense of powerlessness expressed by adult professionals represents reactive counter-transference reactions. Counsellors may absorb projected feelings of disempowerment from the young client, or proactive counter-transference originating in the counsellor's own early life but

provoked by the encounter with the young person at risk (Clarkson, 2004; Rowan & Jacobs, 2002; Gelso and Hayes, 2007). Stolorow and Atwood (1991) caution against trying to determine the precise origins of affective reactions in the intersubjective space, between counsellor and client. The realities of working in the front-line of safeguarding with limited resources and funding constraint, in a culture of professional accountability and managerialism may also appropriately evoke feelings of powerlessness (Rustin, 2005; Ruch, 2012; Ferguson, 2017). This real-world professional experience may compound forms of projected powerlessness arising from contact with vulnerable young people. My reading of the narrative and thematic analysis suggests all these processes are at work for both safeguarding leads and counsellors.

Professional Relationships

The narrative analysis revealed that insecure relationships between counsellors and safeguarding leads contribute to counsellor stress and anxiety and hence potentially to counsellor psychological *unavailability*. Previous research points to the importance of school counsellors having opportunities to create and maintain professional relationships with school staff (Harris, 2009; Hamilton-Roberts, 2012; Armstrong, 2014). As described in Chapter 3, some studies highlight that a combination of under-developed relationships with school staff, different professional cultures and discourses between education and counselling can affect school counselling provision. This sometimes led to counsellors leaving their posts to protect their own well-being (Harris, 2009; Hamilton-Roberts; Moor, 2014). The role of clinical supervision in offering reflective space and containment has been well-established (Carroll, 2009; Hawkins and Shohet, 2012; Peacock, 2014). However, my case study details how on-site proximal professional relationships with DSLs may also contribute towards the containment of school-based counsellors during the increased stress of safeguarding processes (Bion, 1970). This on-site containment may prevent school counsellors from being over-taken by anxiety and other powerful feelings, which in turn may well support clearer cognition, reflection and mentalization, and an ability to retain a focus on the young person's frame of reference (Fonagy et al., 2004). These findings reveal how professional relationships, external to the counselling alliance, also potentially support counsellor psychological *availability*, within it.

Reciprocal professional relationships between school counsellors and safeguarding leads may be mutually supportive. Lefevre et al. (2013) highlight the need for training and supervision of

safeguarding leads. DSLs in secondary schools, may have other significant teaching or management responsibilities, often receive little formal supervision and often have large numbers of safeguarding referrals (Baginsky, 2008; Richards, 2018). Austerity, increasing academisation especially in English schools and relative cuts in education spending may also intensify the pressure on these professionals (Belfield and Siebeta/IFS, 2017). Three counsellor participants suggested that they provided informal supervision for their DSL. Intriguingly, the counsellors suggested that safeguarding leads value their confidential approach, which enabled DSLs to freely discuss their concerns about students.

All the counsellors in the study named their supervisors as a significant source of support and containment, but most also commented about how they may not be immediately available (by phone). There were several instances where counsellors described using clinical supervision to reflect on how they may unconsciously absorb the projections of vulnerable feelings from clients (Clarkson, 2004). Counsellor interviews often described supervision as retrospective 'reflection-on-action', invaluable for exploring counter-transference projections (Schön, 1983; Clarkson, 2004). Some commented on how supervision supported the development of their internalized supervisor and therefore on-going reflexivity in their practice (Casement, 2013; Wheeler and Richards, 2007).

Informal peer supervision and collaboration emerges as a significant source of support. Individual counsellors described phoning their colleagues in other schools, to check out how to proceed with individual clients. The non-hierarchical nature of these contacts seemed to add to their perceived supportiveness. Such contacts seem to operate as 'buffer zones' against perceived management judgement and the anxiety about 'getting it wrong' prevalent in safeguarding processes (Bellamy and Raab, 2010; Munro, 2011). US school counselling literature has highlighted how peer supervision/collaboration is perceived as less threatening (Agnew, Vaught, Getz, and Fortune, 2000; Wilkerson, 2006). This makes it easier to discuss challenges and uncertainties, which contributes to job satisfaction, developing communities of practice and professional development. Peer supervision has received little comparative attention in UK school counselling literature, although its value in allowing practitioners to learn from each other's successes and failures is generally established (Carroll, 2009; Cummings, 2002).

Contained or 'Constrained'? A mis/application of theories of containment

A double standard emerged in my data around professionals' use of the word 'containment' and how it is applied to safeguarding processes. 'Containment' was used to justify adults making the decision to share information, sometimes in ways that did not involve the participation of young people. Most counsellors seemed aware of theories of containment which describe the reflective function of relationships where arousal is lowered by a repeated processing and moderating of feelings so that they become manageable and 'thinkable' (Bion, 1970). When applying ideas about containment to their own experience, five counsellors and one safeguarding officer described having good containing reflective space as crucial to professional practice, clinical judgement and management of their own anxiety. These statements by counsellors suggest an active working knowledge of the meaning of containment and its theoretical relationship with affect regulation and clear thinking (Bion, 1970). However, when referring to young people, counsellor and DSL discourse about 'containment' seemed to be fused with everyday notions of 'constraining' young people. This is resonant of Steckley's (2010) study of physical restraint in residential settings, which links the decline in the use of psychodynamic theory in social work (and the rise in managerialism), with confusions between 'constraining' young people and 'containment'. The counsellors in my study cannot offer this factor as the source of this mis/application.

Sometimes, in my data, 'containment' seemed to be associated by professionals with ideas about a holding space, perhaps originating from Winnicott's depiction of the physical and psychological holding of an infant in a safe space - originally the literal arms of the parent (1965a). This 'protected' space insulates infant from difficulty, so that they can begin to develop capacities to recognise thoughts and feelings, create symbols, play and develop a secure sense of self. All professionals asserted their belief that in some situations, it is less anxiety provoking (for young people) for adults to take charge. However, the young people in this study vehemently disputed this, and argued that, instead, participatory engagement lowers anxiety and professionals taking matters '*out of (their) hands*' increases anxiety. It is arguable that, when a young person is in danger, evoking the object-relations idea of a physically protected 'holding space' is warranted. However, the specific use of the word 'containment' when talking about *constraining* young people's participation in safeguarding processes could be regarded as a selective mis/application of containment theory in professional discourse. Adult professionals taking charge in this non-participatory way could

be serving to lower the anxiety of the adult professionals rather than the young people. It raises questions about whether professionals are struggling to contain their own anxiety (which may likely include projective anxiety) resulting in an unconscious shift into authoritative ‘rescuer’ which feels more powerful for them and enables them to lower their arousal (Karpman, 1968; Ruch, 2012). This shift could also be an unconscious avoidance of further contact with the distress of the young person and therefore a defensive action. This process would make counsellors psychologically *unavailable* to young clients.

This discussion raises questions about whether the ideas about ‘containment’ are being mis/applied to license the use of adult authority in ways that young participants suggest, raise clients’ anxiety and possibly weaken trust in alliances.

Organisational Containment: The Trust is the Work

My data analysis suggests that concentric layers of trust: trust between the counsellor and the young person; trust between the counsellor and the school safeguarding officer and the counsellor and the counselling organisation are necessary to fully support *availability* through information sharing. These outer circles of containment and trust are influenced by a variety of social and contextual processes and forces that operate far distant from the relationship between the school counsellor and the young person in the counselling room. The Place2Be was named by all counsellor participants, as the largest general source of support. Equally, young people expressed high degrees of confidence and respect for the organisation. However, bilateral mistrust of the organisation was expressed, by three counsellors where they did not trust that they would be sufficiently supported, or they felt that the agency did not trust them. This factor seemed to impact upon their ability to contain their clients’ material. The counsellors concerned (Bethany, C2; Ellie, C4; Curtis, C3), linked agency mistrust to agency anxiety. The fieldwork for this study happened⁴⁸ in the immediate aftermath of the sudden closure of Kids Company in August 2015, another charity working to support the mental health of young people amid allegations of financial mismanagement and sexual abuse (Rana, 2018). Although very different organisations, it could be argued that the sudden and unexpected closure of this children’s charity added to Place2Be anxiety, especially

⁴⁸ The fieldwork for this project took place between September 2015 and Sept 2016.

concerning safeguarding, at the point that this research was carried out. Discussion with senior managers at the Place2Be revealed an associated fear of losing funding from government, or from individual schools, arising out of a possible association with Kids Company. This sense of institutional vulnerability may have been compounded by general government austerity policies giving rise to cuts to school budgets from which school counselling was mostly financed (McLaughlin, 2014). At the time of writing the UK has experienced large scale real term cuts of school funding that are part of the backdrop to this research, particularly within England (Belfield and Siebeta/IFS, 2017). Despite policy developments that seek to improve mental health provision for young people (H.M. Gov, 2015) and the publishing of non-statutory guidance (DfE, 2016), the UK government failed to move to provide mainstream funding for secondary school counselling in England. This means that SBC in England does not have parity with the other nations within the UK where it is now centrally funded (Wales and Northern Ireland), and Scotland, where large scale funding has been announced (Cooper, 2013a; Hill et al., 2011; SG, 2019). For the Place2Be this means that their funding is already dependent on over-stretched school budgets, is likely to remain precarious. These financial pressures may lead to counselling being viewed as a luxury outside of the central purpose of schools. Such real-world pressures inevitably impact institutional anxiety, however, more implicit processes may also be significant.

Psychoanalytic concepts (notably from Klein) have been used to describe the complex processes that arise in organisations that work with vulnerable people to defend against the anxiety and risks involved (See Menzies-Lyth 1992; Stein, 2000; De Board, 2014; Klein in Segal, 2018). From the concept of splitting (ascribing all good to one object and all bad to another) and envious attacks (or unconscious feelings of ill-will towards objects who we perceive possess superior qualities), these ideas suggest that complex processes may be at work under the surface to defend against unbearable feelings of clients and the risks they face (Hinshelwood & Skogstad, 2002; Trevithick, 2011). Both Emanuel (2002) and Sprince (2000) pertinently use a psychodynamic framework to offer biographic accounts of their consultative psychotherapeutic work with looked after children's services and stress the importance of organizational containment. These workers describe how organisations become saturated with powerful projections of the chaotic feelings of the young people they work with, that can be replicated through unconscious processes. Emanuel (2002) makes the parallel link about her own uncertainty about continuing in her post and the young people's anxieties about placement changes.

Five of the six counsellors explicitly named organisational anxiety as a factor that influenced safeguarding practice. These counsellors described anxious messages conveyed in agency child protection training and other agency meetings. Gaby (C6) shared her concern about the '*red herring*' of defensive practice, which she partially attributed to anxiety for the organisation itself. As discussed in Chapter 3, a range of social work research has explored the impact of anxious discourses which may have unintended consequences of sidelining young people, their views and expertise (Rustin, 2005; Munro, 2011; Ruch, 2012; Ferguson, 2017). This may result in a curtailing of young people's rights to participation and views on decisions that profoundly affect them. Menzies-Lyth's (1992) early discussions about organisational anxiety illuminated how agencies can also use their processes, structures and bureaucracies as a defence against contacting the unbearable feelings of the vulnerable people with which they work. Munro (2011: 6) commented on defensive practice and a '*following rules*' rather than '*exercising judgement*' approach that may arise out of organizational fear (see also Ruch, 2005). Anxious messages are inevitably passed on to practitioners and impact upon their own subjective experiences of containment. At worst, instead of feeling supported there is a danger that they may sometimes feel mistrusted and over-managed. This, in turn, is likely to increase a preoccupation with being seen to 'get it right' in safeguarding processes and hence potentially limits counsellor *availability* for young people.

It is also vital to consider the wider context of austerity politics/policies and resulting cuts in public spending on which the provision of school counselling is dependent (McLaughlin, 2014). A cultural zeitgeist of individualism that focusses on blaming individual professionals when things go wrong may serve to increase professional anxiety and fear of shame (O'Grady, 2005; Belamy and Raab, 2010). These factors contribute to organisational anxiety and a preoccupation with subsequent consequences for individual practitioners, containment and availability during information sharing. I am reminded of Ecological Systems Theory, which suggests that the processes that operate in a young person's exosystem, which have no direct contact with a young person may exert a powerful influence (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Equally, Smail's (2018) contextual framework for exploring how the distal origins of distress, which he attributes to wider mechanisms of economic and social power, are masked by proximal processes such as interpersonal relationships and internal affect. These ideas suggest that individuals may focus on processes in their immediate environment and fail to discern the outer forces that are contributing to their subjective experiences. These may include powerful discourses that emphasise protocol, sometimes at the expense of focussing on professional

relationships with young people (Hingley-Jones, and Ruch, 2016). Such ideas may lend weight to the idea that in delineating what might obstruct trust between counsellors and young people during safeguarding processes, it is important to consider how counsellors are influenced by wider social processes. This factor is worthy of further research.

The following chapter concludes this thesis by considering the limitations and implications of this case study. I also outline the ways in which I have used my findings to develop practice in this area and offer a personal reflection on my PhD journey.

Chapter 9: Conclusion: The Trust is the Work

As revealed in Chapter 2, many UK studies point to the value of trust in counselling and safeguarding with young people respectively. Before this case study, few have articulated the mechanisms that go into creating trust at the intersection of these practices. In Chapter 6, Frances' (C5) assertion that *'The Trust is the Work'* encapsulated ideas about the relationship between positive therapeutic outcomes and trust, and how this interrelates with promoting young people's safety in school based counselling (SBC). From this arose the final title of my thesis. For such outcomes to be possible, trust also needs to be embedded between professionals and the institutions where they work.

Case study often aims to cultivate theory to support active development of 'real-world' practice (Stiles, 2007). Equally, phronetic researchers should *'outline how things may be done differently'* (Flyvbjerg, 2001:140). This phronetic case study was therefore centrally concerned with transformation and the meaningful development of practice. Here in my concluding chapter, I outline the implications of my findings for school-based counsellors (SBCs), counselling providers and other key professionals and detail how I have actively sought to influence practice. I provide a consideration of the limitations of this case study, and the opportunities that might arise for further research in this area.

Implications for School Counselling Providers and Counsellors

Recognizing Young People's Expertise

In Chapter 7, I discussed how this study illuminated the depth of young people's phronesis in reflecting on the ethical complexities of *'what is good to do'* at the intersection of safeguarding and counselling (Schram, 2012:19). This indicates that secondary school counselling providers need to develop a model of safeguarding that not only recognizes the vulnerabilities of young people, but also the contextual knowledge and expertise they have of their immediate contexts, their families and their lives. I recommend counselling providers consult with their young service users about the design of safeguarding policies and information sharing practice. This will serve to support the development of youth centred practices and could engender an ongoing dialogue about the sort of participation young people want through safeguarding processes. The setting up of regular young service user groups locally in schools, and across wider regional clusters could support this process.

Recognizing Professional Expertise

This study indicated that it is important for counselling providers to recognize the expertise of professionals in building relationships of trust with young people. The skill required to maintain relationships through information sharing needs to be acknowledged, given the strong relationship between trust and confidentiality for young people. Safeguarding policy should emphasise that this process requires reflection, reflexivity and active decision-making by counsellors. Phronesis may be a powerful conceptual framework for considering such professional processes (Flyvbjerg, Landman, and Schram, 2012).

Maintaining Availability: Advice for Counsellors and Providers

Sharing information from counselling sessions requires careful attention to the ongoing therapeutic relationship and perceived counsellor *availability*. Maintaining on-going trust with a young person through safeguarding is a complex relational process. This recognizes that unlike teachers, young people expect counsellors to work confidentially. Counselling providers need to affirm that upholding trust is likely to further contribute to client safety, facilitate further disclosures, as well as promoting positive counselling outcomes. Counselling agencies should provide specific training for counsellors and those who supervise them, to support this process. This needs to be maintained by on-going clinical and peer supervision. Organizational culture needs to be focused on young people and their views.

Training and Advice for School Counsellors

Counsellors need to be encouraged to formulate a 'both-and' approach to maintaining therapeutic alliances and safeguarding (Lefevre et al., 2018). These facets need to be formulated as interconnected, rather than mutually exclusive, or hierarchical. Training for counsellors in information sharing should emphasize that the disclosure of risk is a significant dilemma for young people and may be an on-going process rather than a one-time event. Counsellors should instigate initial contracts that outline the limits to confidentiality but recognize that these are insufficient to justify information sharing without further discussion with young clients. The training needs to promote the active participation of young people in safeguarding processes, including the right to be party to communications and opportunities to give their views. Safeguarding training should take care not to reinforce everyday

formulations of ‘containment’, that equate it to constraining young people’s choices.

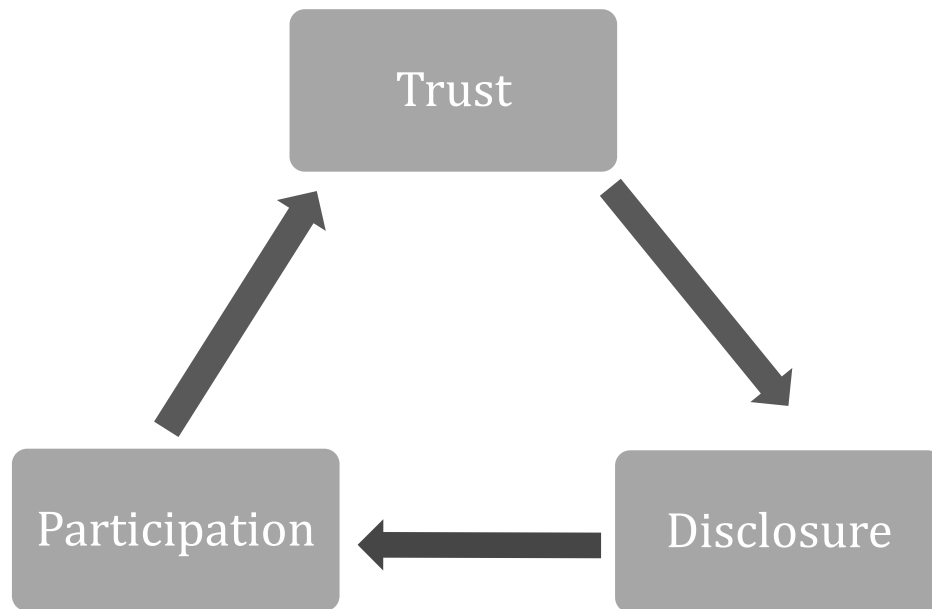
Counsellors need to be honest and transparent about processes and communications and give information back to the young person, where possible. Counsellors should talk to young people about the nature of the concern and, where appropriate, re-frame experiences and explore the impact of the risk on client’s lives. Counsellors need to avoid seeming to take control by offering choices to young people where practical. Counsellors should ask young people what they want to happen, even where it seemed clear that information will have to be passed on to protect them and continue to listen to client’s feelings and concerns. It may be helpful to offer additional support such as accompanying clients to meetings with DSL if the young person wishes it. Young people need to be allowed to set the agenda in sessions following information sharing, and/or engage in unpressurised activities, such as art or games.

Counsellors need to be encouraged by organizational policy and supervisors to recognise their phronesis in making decisions about safeguarding and therapeutic alliances. A key priority is counsellors being able to maintain their reflective functioning and psychological availability. This requires opportunities for reflective containment such as supervision and peer supervision. Counsellors need to seek to develop positive and reciprocal relationships with school DSLs through regular meetings. Where professional relationships with DSLs prove difficult, counsellors may need additional supervisory or other support. I also recommend that institutions such as universities that train and educate counsellors who specialize in working with young people, also incorporate these principles into their programmes of study.

Counselling Providers’ Safeguarding Policies

School counselling providers’ safeguarding policies need to emphasise the interrelationship between trust in professional relationships with young people, participation and safeguarding. This case study suggested that young people’s ongoing trust in counsellors supports disclosure and participatory practices support trust. This infers that that ongoing trust may be a function of **how** counsellors share young people’s information rather than **if** they share information (see Figure 19). This process requires continued counsellor *availability* and an active, participatory engagement with the young person through information sharing.

Figure 19: The Relationship between Trust, Disclosure and Participation in SBC Information Sharing



It is clearly sometimes appropriate to be anxious about young peoples' safety. However, the communication of high levels of anxiety by institutions is likely to impact upon counsellor containment and hence, their *availability* to clients. Counselling providers need to be mindful of this potential and seek to balance confidence with concern. The provision of regular, accessible and reflective clinical supervision will support the processing of strong feelings and projections and may help counsellors to maintain a focus on the young client. Supervisory support needs to be accessible to counsellors during the school day when safeguarding concerns emerge. Agencies need to provide regular opportunities for SBCs to network with each other, share expertise and engage in peer supervision. Although further research is necessary, a counsellor 'buddy' or peer mentor/supervisor scheme may support counsellor containment.

SBCs and DSLs have reservations about the effect of very low thresholds for sharing information on alliances with young people. Further erosion of young people's limited confidentiality may be counterproductive, preventing young people from attending counselling, getting support and making disclosures. There was some indication that high referral rates may impact the efficiency of school safeguarding processes for young people who are in significant danger. This aspect warrants further research and professional discussions with relevant stakeholders such as CAMHS, Children's Services and school DSLs.

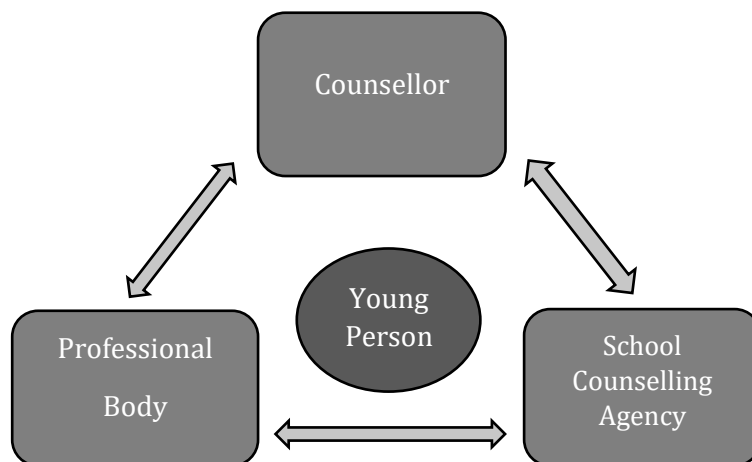
Working Contracts

SBCs need working contracts that recognize the importance of non-contact time to develop professional relationships with school staff. These should include the capacity for regular meetings with DSLs. Where schools have not previously employed a counsellor, or where the individual counsellor is new to the school, they may require greater supervisory support to maintain reflective practice. Equally, the management of school-based counsellors needs to recognize that when school DSLs change, counsellors may need further support and time to establish a working professional relationship with new staff. SBCs working contracts need to accommodate the extra time that safeguarding requires and offer flexibility that allows counsellors to support young people through these situations.

Availability as a Mutual Endeavour

Maintaining counsellor availability has emerged as a mutual endeavour. Although, individual counsellors have a professional responsibility to maintain their availability, this can only be achieved when they are adequately supported by policies and procedures which provide sufficient containment. Professional regulatory bodies such as the BACP and the UKCP also have a responsibility to recognise and support the significance of school counsellor *availability* through safeguarding processes. This could be achieved through recognizing the implication of counsellor *availability* in ethical guidance frameworks and outlining the requirement for sufficient reflection and containment in sections that discuss working with young people and safeguarding (see, Figure 20).

Figure 20: Counsellor Availability as a Mutual Endeavour



Implications for other Professionals Working with Young People

Many of the principles discussed above are valid for other practitioners who work to safeguard young people such as school staff and social workers. The role of trust in safeguarding processes has been previously established. However, what is significant here is the detail of **how** practitioners can share young people's information and still maintain trust. Social workers and teachers (especially those with specific safeguarding responsibilities) would benefit from training in active listening and transparent communication processes, to best facilitate young people's perception of participation. This could refocus attention on developing professional relationships with young people and limit the tendency for completing bureaucracy to dominate. The extension of relational-based practice and theory may help practitioners to think about the impact of the powerful feelings that safeguarding evokes on decision-making and professional practice (Ruch, 2013; Ferguson, 2017; Hingley-Jones, and Ruch, 2016). Safeguarding policy and practice needs to not only promote participation in principle, but actively develop participatory methods of working in practice with young people. There is an opportunity to fully comply with pre-existing DfE guidance, which suggests *'the child's wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and.... Systems should be in place for children to express their views.'* (DfE, 2018)

School managers need to encourage mutual collegial relationships between school counsellors and DSLs, which include regular ring-fenced liaison meetings. These could be an opportunity to develop mutually beneficial reciprocal relationships to support DSLs and SBCs alike, and promote mutual professional understanding.

Transforming School Counsellor Information Sharing

Flyvbjerg suggests that phronetic research needs to be evaluated by its potential to have a real-world impact on *'real people'* and sets out not just to explore practice, but to *'transform'* it (Flyvbjerg, 2012: 287). This inevitably linked with ideas from feminist research about the development of praxis or good action, and the need for research to be a form of constructive social action (Eubanks, 2012). This suggests that the ultimate value of phronetic research needs to be measured not by metrics and citations, but by the real-world development of

policy and practice (Schram, Flyvbjerg and Landman, 2014). This clearly requires action outside of thesis writing. Below, I describe how my research process has sought to develop impact.

National Counselling Research award and Research Film and Publicity

In May 2017 this PhD research was presented with the CPCAB (Counselling and Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body) Research Award at the 2017 British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) Research Conference in Chester. This prize was awarded by evaluating presentation submissions for the national BACP conference and selecting the research that has the most significant potential to develop practice. The CPCAB research award was designed to '*raise awareness of research that has important implications for counselling training or practice*' (www.CPCAB.co.uk, 2018). My prize included funding and support to produce a film about the research with the aim of disseminating its findings and developing professional practice. The film was hosted on a national online platform on the main research page on the BACP website and on the CPCAB website. This fifty minute film, in which I was interviewed about this research can be found at <https://www.bacp.co.uk/events-and-resources/research/cpcab-counselling-research-award/> and at www.cpcab.co.uk/researchaward/. This film publishes in depth information about my findings at the heart of the research page on the website of the largest professional counselling organization in the UK. Publicity about the film was also included in an email newsletter to all BACP members nationally. There was also an associated magazine article in the BACP Therapy magazine (BACP, Jan 2018) describing the film and my research.

Film Screenings and Research Presentations

I have taken part in film screenings at The Cambridge Forum for Children's Emotional Well-being at the University of Cambridge, and at The Centre for Innovation and Research in Childhood and Youth, at Sussex University. These screenings were attended by academics, researchers and stakeholders, such as local school counsellors, school counselling agency managers, other therapists working with young people and therapeutic trainers/educators. The screenings and seminars were very enthusiastically received by stakeholders and academics, and impact surveys

were completed by 27 delegates. I felt enriched by the professional discussions that took place at these events. All respondents said that this research would influence their professional practice in the future.⁴⁹ I have included a range of comments from these impact surveys below.

Below counsellor delegates respond to the question 'How the research might influence their ongoing practice?

School counsellor

'I would be more open and transparent with young people about the sharing process....I would also focus on calming my own anxieties and trust myself, in order to stay in the room with the child so that they feel held and supported.'

Child and Adolescent Therapist

'It has increased my awareness of building relationships with DSL and not avoiding the tricky issues around the client's involvement after disclosure.'

The following feedback is from the manager of a school-based counselling agency which suggests how the research might influence both their safeguarding policy and training for school counsellors.

School Counselling Manager

'Rethinking reporting procedures within (agency name) and providing training in involving the child or young person.'

Other professionals who attended these seminars included social work lecturers and a social worker who was currently training to be a youth counsellor and teachers. They each described how the research might influence their ongoing practice.

A social work lecturer

'It will certainly influence my teaching and work with students in school placements, providing insight into the need for trusting relationships.'

Social worker/trainee counsellor

⁴⁹ See Appendix D for a further selection of impact survey responses.

'To be aware of how bureaucratic processes can ignore/disregard the impact on the child'.

School Teacher.

'I think it will be really interesting to feed this back to the pastoral team in my school. It highlights the importance of making relationships... with colleagues'.

Since 2014, I have presented at several national counselling and psychotherapy conferences to discuss both my research and the phronetic case study methodology in which it is situated⁵⁰. I have also presented my research locally within Sussex University (see, Appendix D).

Feedback to the Place2Be

I have reported my findings directly to the Place2Be. This has included discussing my research at the national meeting of Place2Be secondary school counsellors. My research was warmly received by these practitioners who discussed in detail their validation of the importance of maintaining trust with young people and obstacles they experience in doing so.⁵¹ I also presented my findings to the national meeting of Place2Be School Cluster Managers who are responsible for coordinating groups of linked primary and secondary schools in specific localities. I was nervous about these presentations, as I had some worries about how my ideas would be received considering professional anxieties about safeguarding. However, this group also engaged enthusiastically and validated my findings. Many of the managers at this meeting expressed a belief that the general approach recommended by the study overlapped with the notions of good practice they would hope to encourage amongst their counsellors. One manager had concerns about giving too much emphasis on liaising with young people, in the face of child protection risks.

I also presented my findings directly to members of the senior management team of the Place2Be including the then National Clinical Director, Head of Safeguarding and Head of Research for the organization. All three were very interested and were keen to develop training in accordance with some of the key findings. I have had many requests for an article based on this research, but I had to concentrate over the last 18 months on completing this

⁵⁰ See Appendix D.

⁵¹ I regret not distributing the impact survey at this event, and others at the Place2Be.

thesis. It is my intention to publish several articles based on this research in professional/academic journals on competition.

Methodological Contribution: The Trust is the Work

In 2017, I presented a methodological paper with a colleague, at the BACP research conference that discussed applying ideas about phronesis to counselling research (Fuller and Holliday, 2016). Our argument was based on findings from a largescale review of psychotherapy studies that suggests a Contextual Model of practice better fits the evidence of what works in therapy than a medical model based on specific techniques and interventions for specific conditions (See Wampold and Imel, 2015). If true, it becomes vital to develop contextual-based counselling research, to explore what works in therapy. There has been growing interest in developing phronetic research to explore contextual processes in counselling (See Frank, 2006; Smythe, MacCulloch, and Charmley, 2009; Holliday, 2016; Wyatt, 2017). At the time of writing, I believe this study to be an original attempt to apply phronesis to a PhD in the field of counselling.

Developing contextual research approaches is not a straightforward, nor a neat endeavour (Newby, 2014; Smit and Derksen, 2017). I have sought to apply Landman's (2012) different levels of analysis —linear, analytical, affective and relational— to create a holistic, naturalistic study of the humanness of school counsellor information sharing (Todre, 2007). The use of ideas about Phronetic Bricolage (Trnavcevic and Biloslavo, 2017) allowed me to use a variety of theoretical lenses including psychosocial ideas, to explore what might be being communicated unconsciously about affective experiences, and narrative ideas to explore the relational intentions of communications (Clarke, 2002; Riessman, 2008). These meanings were cross-referenced with more content-based analysis of the dis/connects between different participants'/groups' data. I sought to create conversations in the data collection and analysis to realise Flyvbjerg's (2001:139) '*polyphony of voices*' to best distil the practical wisdom of my participants. This process made use of the contextual and contingent expertise and 'feel for the game' of young people and professionals (Bourdieu, 1998). The iterative research process allowed participants to reflect on their own meanings and those of others. This complex multi-layered and multi-theorized process greatly stretched my own phronesis as a nascent researcher. However, it enabled me to apply my relational stance, incorporating personal meaning making and affective experiences into my data analysis within the largely

social-constructionist framework of phronetic social science (Flyvbjerg, 2001). In doing this, I have embraced Trnavcevic and Biloslavo, (2017) assertion that methodologies can be both constructed and continually under construction in a value-based research-approach. This is inevitably an exploratory model of how phronetic counselling case study can be conducted, which I hope that I, and others, will be able to take forward, develop and refine.

I have also used the concept of phronesis to grandstand the reflexive, contextual and ethical insight of my young participants (Manning, 2012). To do this, I developed processes such as using a fictional vignette to support their ethical involvement and the use of a video of the professionals' views as an accessible, engaging and non-threatening vehicle for facilitating their critiques of professionals' ideas. These facilitative processes allowed the voices of young people to enter research about school counsellor information sharing. Their ability to reflect on the overlapping vulnerabilities at the intersection of counselling and safeguarding helped to illuminate young people's phronesis about ethically complex issues.

Limitations

I acknowledge that my findings rest on the perceptions and converging viewpoints of a small voluntary sample of young people and professionals (Yin, 2009). Volunteering to take part in a project of this kind may infer a premeditated interest or viewpoint (Newby, 2014). Further, my sampling may have been affected by counsellor gatekeepers' preconceptions when selecting young people to participate. Important contrasting views may have been left out. Although, I believe my research to be trustworthy and valid, I do not claim it is statistically representative or generalisable (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). However, this not the sort of knowledge I was seeking to create. Simmons (1996) explores the paradox of the value of case study *'By studying the uniqueness of the particular, we come to understand the universal'*. This idea applies Stake's (2005) ideas about the usefulness of cases not only in developing theory, but also in illuminating an experiential understanding of complexity, offering readers a type of 'naturalistic generalisation' where the immediacy, detail and analytic depth of the case allows the ideas generated to be applied to different contexts. I sought to embrace Yin's (2010) ideas about the value of analytic generalization based on a rigorous grounding in *'existing research literature'* where the aim is to pose *'propositions and hypotheses at a conceptual level higher than that of the specific case'*. I am reminded of Dreyfus' claims about the study of cases as necessary to move from lower to higher levels in the learning process, it is this insight I have been seeking (Flyvbjerg, 2001). The corporate phronesis of my participants has allowed me to

build a theory of counsellor availability that may be of wider relevance, but this may need to be dis/confirmed through other research. I regret that I was not able to recruit more safeguarding leads as I believe that might have added rigour and valuable additional professional phronesis to this project. Practical constraints meant that the counsellors I talked to were confined to more experienced school practice managers and it may have been illuminating to include the voices of less experienced practitioners.

The findings, discussion and implications of this research rest on my own analysis and interrogation of my data and in this; I acknowledge my position as a nascent researcher. Although, not without its perceived limitations, case study is a familiar and established form of inquiry within counselling research (McLeod, 2010). However, the phronetic stance of this case study is largely untested within counselling research. Through applying phronetic bricolage (Trnavcevic and Biloslavo, 2017) I have expanded an approach that originated in urban planning to encompass a more affective and relational style. This may be too theoretically dizzying for some (McLeod, 2001; Kitcheloe, 2001). The stretch to encompass a range of theorists from Bion to Foucault may not appeal to purists. I acknowledge that my findings could be regarded as exploratory, because my methodology is also necessarily an exploration of the applicability of phronetic ideas for researching counselling. There are also limitations associated with my use of a fictional information vignette. These limitations are closely discussed in Chapter 5⁵².

Ways Forward

I hope to take forward phronesis as a methodological approach and refine its application to counselling. I aim to develop research that can explore the human complexity of practice decisions. I believe a phronetic approach to data analysis and collection could be further refined to illuminate what may seem to be tacit decision-making by practitioners. This might include a multi-layered hyper 'slow-motion' process of analysing individual practice decisions using different levels of analysis, linear, analytical, affective and relational, and multiple perspectives (Landman, 2012). This could be likened to an aria in an opera that slows the narrative, to expose the internal feelings and deliberations of characters, to make their actions

⁵² See page 90

understandable by an audience. This style of slow, in depth and holistic analysis would be equally relevant for exploring practice decisions of other professionals such as teachers and social workers.

Leading directly from this research, I hope to develop a study that explores the individual experiences of young people who have had information shared from school counselling sessions. This research could chart individual young people's actual experiences during safeguarding processes and beyond. Such a study would also potentially highlight the therapeutic opportunities and outcomes of working with young people during safeguarding processes (Reeves, 2015). This is a theme strongly implied by my case study, but its design involving a fictional vignette did not allow me to explore this area in depth.

I also hope to develop research projects to investigate further young people's application of phronetic decision-making in other areas of moral complexity or risk. Such future research could potentially strengthen arguments for young people's active involvement in real world decisions in areas that impact their day to day lives. I also remain interested in how young people make the judgement to trust counsellors and other professionals enough to disclose their concerns with them. I still believe that this is an area that requires, much further exploration and excavation.

I now offer a reflection on my own PhD research journey.

Personal Reflexive Statement

'Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.' Kierkegaard (In Rogers and Stevens, 1973: 167)

The quote from Kierkegaard above could equally be applied to undertaking a PhD. I only understood what it means to do a PhD and perhaps all my motivations for doing so, as I complete this thesis. This started as a personal journey rooted in my own early experience as a counsellor working in secondary schools, and with young people in care. The seed of this thesis was sown by my efforts to protect the trust in alliances with young people during safeguarding processes. As this study has progressed, I have been aware of a parallel process has been happening. My current professional role and PhD study are both situated within an Education Department. In this sense, my position mirrors that of my counsellor participants. I am, once again, a lone counsellor amongst educationists. This has kept me sharply focused on

the opportunities of /necessity of breaking down professional barricades and sharing knowledge and insight across disciplines.

Underneath these professional experiences, my early family life taught me how precarious trust can be and how any form of communication of harm depends on being able to develop enough trust in adults. Trust is a personal pre-occupation, not just a professional interest. Trust has also been *'the work'* throughout this PhD. This has included my efforts to engender trust in my counsellors, safeguarding leads and young participants, so that they felt enough safety to talk openly with me, for which I am deeply indebted. I also had to work to create reciprocal trust with the Place2Be for them to allow me access to their networks and staff. I have needed to trust in my supervisors to read and help me hone my ideas and in myself, to complete this huge task. The writing of a thesis is also about seeking to generate trust in my examiners about my thinking and my research processes. I now undertake a new process of trust with my readers in the hope that they, too, come to value the unique practical wisdom of the young people and professionals who shared their ideas about *'what's good to do'* (Schram, 2012:19).

Conclusion

To conclude, I have explored the dialogic, relational, affective and contextual processes of school counsellor information sharing. The study has revealed that, for young people, continued trust requires continued *availability*. To accomplish this, counsellors need to be able to draw on their *'reflection in action'*, made easier where they have opportunities for professional containment themselves and reciprocal working relationships with safeguarding leads (Schön, 1983). Beyond this, maintaining trust requires *'withness thinking'* and phronetic deliberation (Shotter, and Tsoukas, 2014:391).

Foucault asserts that *'discourses that up until then had seemed to go without saying become problematic, difficult, dangerous'* (Foucault, In Miller, 2000:235). When faced with precarious situations professionals often believed they *'have to'* take charge *'because it's safeguarding'*. The danger of this switch to a directive, *'safeguarding mode'* is that it potentially disrupts delicate co-created space. In contrast, many young people, in their wisdom, highlighted how turning on this *'adult authority'* approach might cause them to lose trust and *'button it more'* perhaps, withholding further disclosures. The sensitivity of the young participants to a safeguarding *'off-switch'* is one of my lasting impressions of my fieldwork. As I close, I remain

struck by the dangers of the mis/use of theories of containment to justify non-participatory information sharing practice. Maintaining a 'between space' and continuing to engage in mutual dialogue has emerged as a crucial factor for young people to feel included (Buber, 1971; Finlay, 2015). It supports their continued belief that counselling is a different sort of relationship where power is more reciprocal, even where confidentiality becomes limited.

This research has illuminated the often obscured phronesis of young people and professionals. Their practical wisdom has provided a clear understanding of how it is possible to protect the trust in counselling relationships whilst sharing information. This has emerged as a profoundly human process. I have come to believe that in the face of both professional and defensive pressures to disconnect and switch to an instrumental approach, it requires counsellors to hold firm to a mutual 'I thou' way of relating and maintain their *availability* (Buber, 1971).

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Appendices

For appendices see Volume 2.

